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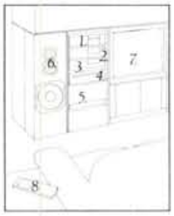

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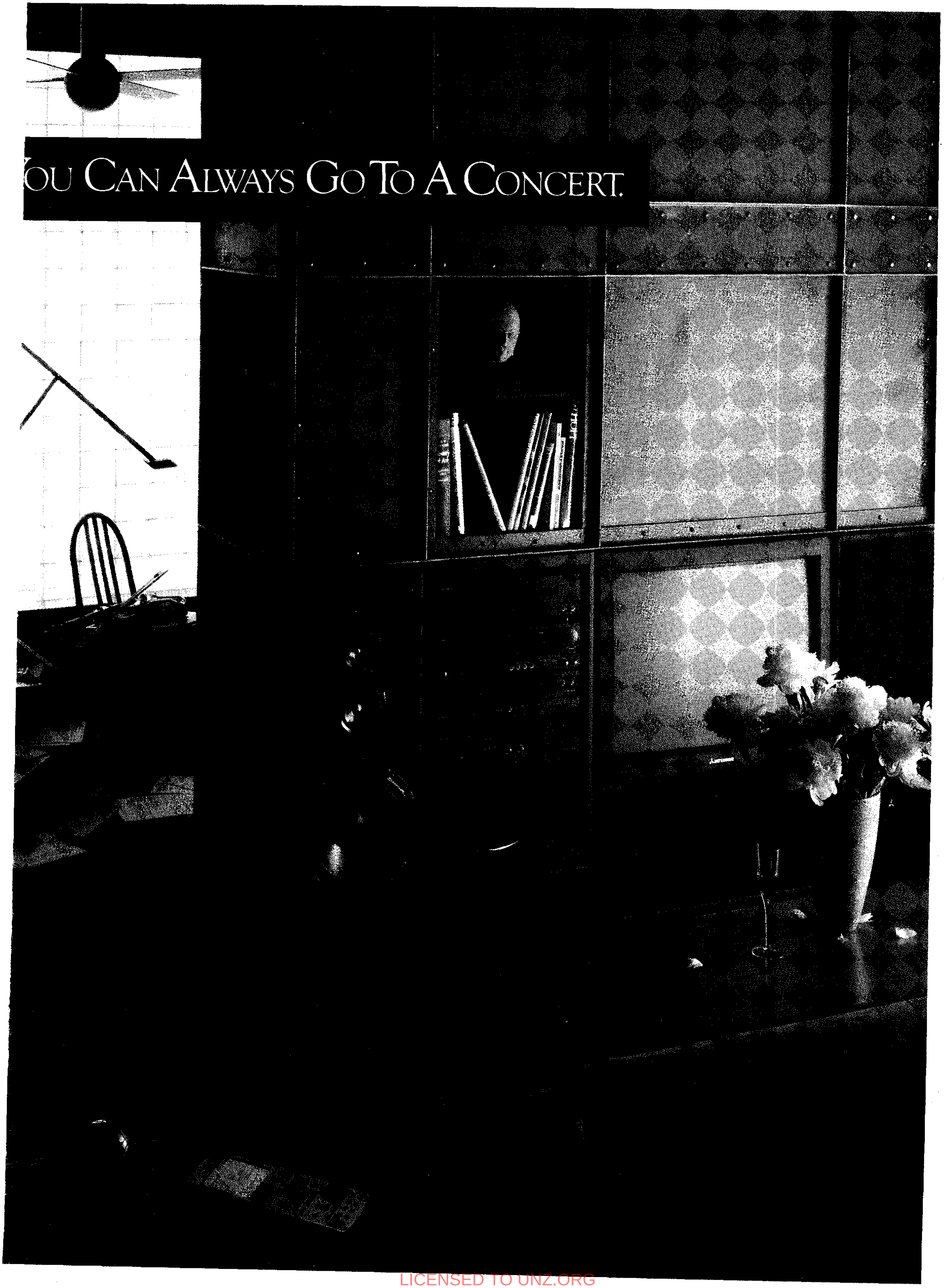
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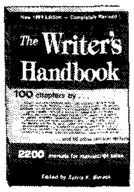
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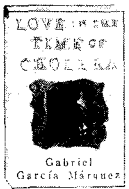
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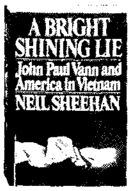
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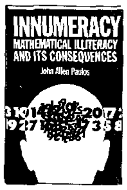
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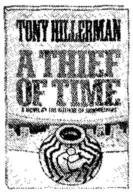
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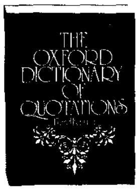
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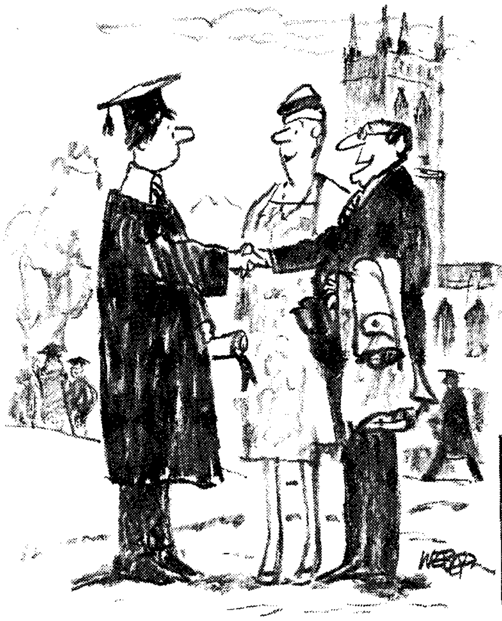

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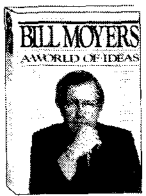
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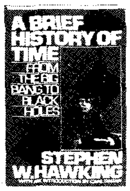
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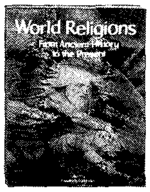
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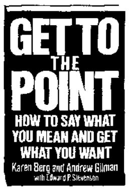
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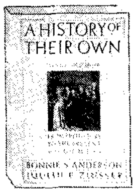
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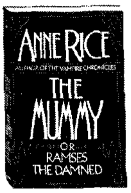
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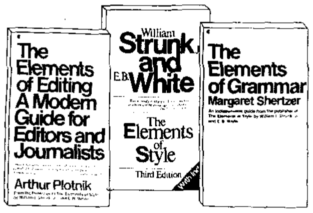
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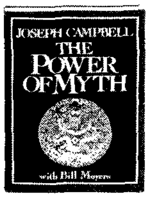
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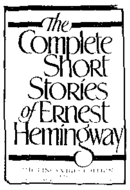
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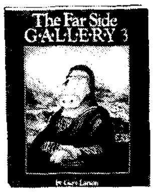
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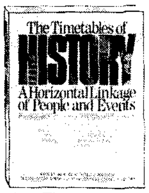
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

WHEN the solo album "Mandy Patinkin" came out, we didn't rush out to buy a copy, mostly because we don't own a CD player. Our reasoning here was a little tenuous: we associated Mr. Patinkin (and heavily marketed solo albums in general) with a level of high-tech virtuosity, in both performance and recording, at which listening becomes either an intimidating experience or a chore. We see now that we were doing Mr. Patinkin an injustice.

"Mandy Patinkin in Concert: Dress Casual," which started performances at the Helen Hayes Theatre, on West 44th Street, in July (after playing a circuit at the Public Theatre earlier this year), is a sheer delight and—what came as a surprise to us—unpretentiousness itself. The show is very low-tech, as a matter of fact: Mr. Patinkin, wearing sneakers, fatigues, and a bright-orange T-shirt, sings only very simple or very complicated songs. For the most part, the spotlight is on the songs themselves, with just one lapse into look-how-intensely-I'm-suffering self-indulgence ("Over the Rainbow"). Half the fun is in Mr. Patinkin's patter and in the elaborate lengths to which he goes to make everything look "casual" and spontaneous: we can't tell whether his sidekick at the piano, Paul Ford, is pretending that he's not having a hard time keeping up with Mr. Patinkin or pretending that he is.

Meanwhile, farther east on 44th Street, another treat for lovers of old song is to be found at Jan Wallman's, where, on August 10 and 17, Al Carmines and David Vaughan will be giving repeat performances of their program of songs with lyrics by P. G. Wodehouse. We saw the show back in June, and we remember feeling that it was the most charming experience we'd had in a long time. The tiny main room at Jan Wallman's is perfectly suited to Messrs. Carmines and Vaughan, who, unlike Mr. Patinkin, don't sing at all flourishingly (or even particularly accurately, always). The evening is for those who find Michael Feinstein too show-bizzy, and, like "Dress Casual," it's about style, persona, and love of the thing itself.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedules and ticket information.)

BUZZSAW BERKELEY—A new musical comedy, conceived by Christopher Ashley and Doug Wright. The score and lyrics are by Michael-John LaChiusa, and the book is by Mr. Wright. The cast includes Ethyl Eichelberger and Keith Reddin. In previews. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

PRIVATES ON PARADE—Jim Dale and Simon Jones star in the 1977 musical by Peter Nichols (book and lyrics) and Denis King (score). In previews. (Roundabout, 100 E. 17th St. 420-1883.)

SHENANDOAH—John Cullum reprises his original role in a revival of the 1975 musical, which was based on James Lee Barrett's 1965 film of the same name. Score by Gary Geld, lyrics by Peter Udell, and book by Mr. Barrett, Philip Rose (who once again directs), and Mr. Udell. Preview on Aug. 7. Opens Aug. 8 at 6:30. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 246-0102.)

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SWEENEY TODD—Bob Gunton and Beth Fowler in the York Theatre Company's production of the Sondheim musical, which had a brief run uptown last spring. Susan H. Schulman is the director. In previews. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

TITUS ANDRONICUS—The second, and final, offering in the New York Shakespeare Festival's summer series in the Park. Donald Moffat has the title role, Kate Mulgrew is Tamora, and Keith David is Aaron. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

NEW THIS SEASON

ARISTOCRATS—Brian Friel's portrait of the family of Judge O'Donnell, of Ballybeg Hall, in Donegal, is witty, ironic, and loving. It is faultlessly performed by Niall Buggy (an astonishing actor who got his start at the Abbey Theatre), John Pankow, Michael O'Neill, Robin Moseley, Maryann Plunkett, and John Christopher Jones, among others, under the direction of Robin Lefèvre. (Reviewed in our issue of 5/8/89.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 246-0102.)

BLACK AND BLUE—An evening of classic blues and jazz, conceived, designed, and directed by Claudio Segovia amd Héctor Orezzoli, who created "Tango Argentino" in a similarly commemorative but far less visually opulent style. Musicians of renown have been assembled, and while Ruth Brown, Linda Hopkins, and Carrie Smith sing, Bunny Briggs, Jimmy Slyde, and a troupe of hoofers young and old give the tap-dance subculture a workout. (2/6/89, under Dancing.) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 246-0102.)

CALL ME ETHEL—Rita McKenzie as Ethel Merman in a one-woman show written and directed by Chris Powich. Presented by the American Jewish Theatre. (Susan Bloch, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

FESTIVAL LATINO IN NEW YORK—A theatrical *celebración*, featuring plays from Latin America and the United States. Unless otherwise noted, all performances are in Spanish, with simultaneous translation available on selected dates. The schedule: Two one-act musicals, "Adios, Tropicana" and "Peggy and Jackson" (both in English), offered by New York's Duo Theatre, Aug. 7-10. . . . ¶ "No More," a play with no dialogue, by Raul Osorio. Performed by Chile's Taller de Investigación Teatral, Aug. 8-13. . . . ¶ "A Midsummer Night's Dream," adapted by Manuel Rueda. Presented by the Dominican Republic's Theatre of Fine Arts, Aug. 11-15. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150. Closes Aug. 20.) . . . **NOTE:** There will also be related film programs at the Public (through Aug. 13) and at the Biograph Cinema (through Aug. 19). For scheduling information, call 598-7155.

THE HEIDI CHRONICLES—Wendy Wasserstein's play looks at first glance like standard baby-boom playwriting fare, but some alchemical combination of graceful-mindedness and good writing enables her to capture, lampoon, and transcend her generation all at the same time. With a superb cast, including Joan Allen, Boyd Gaines, Peter Friedman, Drew McVety, and Joanne Camp. (12/26/88) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

A HOT MINUTE—A musical revue, conceived by Melanie Mintz, about backup singers and their aspirations toward the big time. With Vivian Cherry, Pattie Darcy, Jon Fiore, Vicki Sue Robinson, and John-Martin Green. The show runs two nights a week, on Wednesdays and Thursdays, at 8 and 11, through Aug. 24. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300.)

JEROME ROBBINS' BROADWAY—A collection of high spots from "On the Town," "Billion Dollar Baby," "High Button Shoes," "The King and I," "Peter Pan," "West Side Story," "Gypsy," "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," and "Fiddler on the Roof," all of which were choreographed or directed, or both, by Jerome Robbins. The evening is an orgy of family entertainment, a display of theatrical arts and crafts, and a canonization of Robbins and his era. Whether the fifties was your generation or your parents', this is the show for you. (3/13/89, under Dancing.) (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

THE KATHY AND MO SHOW: PARALLEL LIVES—Comedy skits and vignettes about gender and its role in society, written and performed by Kathy Najimy and Mo Gaffney. (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.)

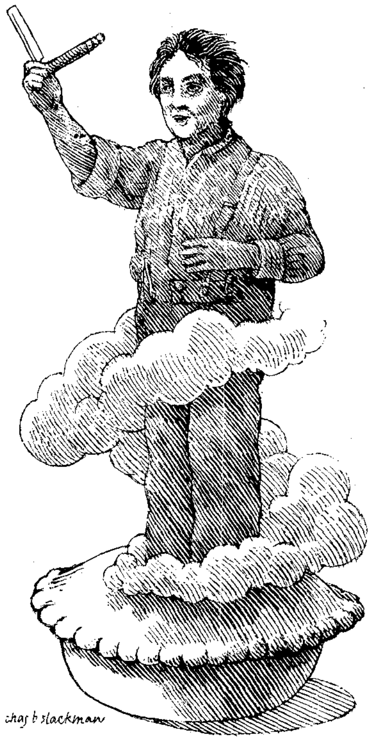
THE LADY IN QUESTION—Charles Busch's new play, set in Germany during the Second World War, is the perfect entertainment for a hot summer night. It's less pointedly a parody of one genre or movie than "Psycho Beach Party," his last work, was, and more a travesty of an entire week's worth of TNT programming, compressed into a single evening of theatre. (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

LARGELY NEW YORK—It would be a mistake to assume that Bill Irwin's dance-mime extravaganza is fundamentally boring because it lacks words; in fact, it has the best "book" on Broadway. The piece is partly a sendup of theatrical technology, partly a comment on the ills that beset a pluralistic society, and partly a debate about art. Irwin puts onstage all the conflicts, tensions, and antagonisms of modern city life and resolves them by means of an invented language. His solution is unrealistic—it obtains only in a theatre—but what makes the message so uplifting is that to understand it you have to learn a new idiom. (5/15/89) (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 246-0102.)

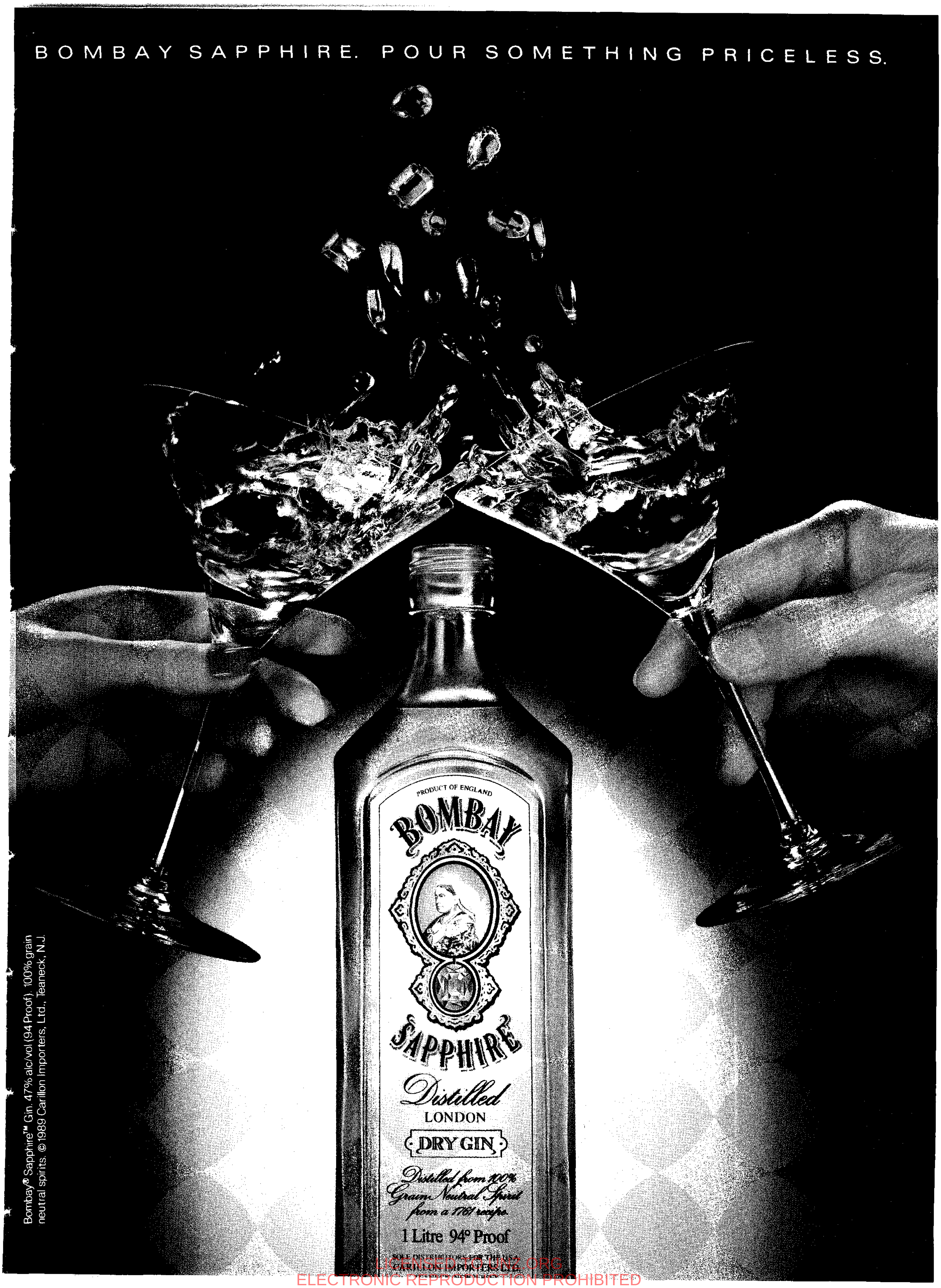
LEND ME A TENOR—The setting of this farce by Ken Ludwig is a hotel suite in Cleveland in 1934, where a famous tenor who is booked to sing "Otello" takes an overdose of barbiturates. A substitute must be found. Under Jerry Zaks' direction, all the surprises up the dramatist's sleeve are brought to comic life. Philip Bosco, Victor Garber, Tovah Feldshuh, J. Smith-Cameron, Caroline Lagerfelt, Ron Holgate, Jane Connell, and Jeff Brooks make up the splendid cast. (3/13/89) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

LIGHT OPERA OF MANHATTAN—Presenting Gilbert and Sullivan's **PIRATES OF PENZANCE.** (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

LOVE LETTERS—Staged readings of A. R. Gurney's two-character play. Aug. 7, Swoosie Kurtz and Edward Herrmann; Aug. 13, Elaine



Bob Gunton in "Sweeney Todd"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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

Stritch and Jason Robards; and Aug. 14, Pamela Reed and William Hurt. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Mandy Patinkin in Concert: Dress Casual—A solo engagement, featuring the music of Berlin, Jolson, Sondheim, and others. With Paul Ford on piano. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 246-0102. Closes Aug. 19.)

Only Kidding!—Jim Geoghan's comedy about standup comedians, in all their panic and desperation, has the ring of authenticity, and jokes that invariably pay off. (One monologue, about a Greek restaurant, is a knockout.) The characters are an aging Catskills type; a young comedy team still scrambling for a foothold; a jumpy writer; and a beef-brained manager. All the actors do well, under the lively direction of Larry Arrick. (5/29/89) (Westside Arts, 407 W. 43rd St. 541-8394.)

Other People's Money—Jerry Sterner's comedy about a New York stockbroker's attempt to take over a decorous New England business maintains its suspense from beginning to end. Kevin Conway can seldom have been better or funnier than he is as Bronx-born Lawrence Garfinkle; Janet Zarish plays his adversary. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

The Pixie Led—A play by Christopher Harris, loosely based on two Gogol stories. Presented by Union 212, a British company. (Judith Anderson, 422 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

Shirley Valentine—Willy Russell's play about a Liverpool housewife who, feeling herself engulfed by drab domesticity, flies off to Greece, where she finds a temporary lover and lives happily ever after. With Ellen Burstyn in the title, and only, role. Directed by Simon Callow. (2/27/89) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Showing Off—As comedy revues go, this one—written by Douglas Bernstein and Denis Markell—isn't at all bad. The winning performances by Mr. Bernstein, Marilyn Pasekoff, Mark Sawyer, and Veanne Cox often make the material seem better than it is, but ultimately they don't compensate for the over-all smugness of what is essentially lifestyle comedy. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.)

Soul Survivor—A comedy by Anthony Bruno, with Jack Wrangler. (Sanford Meisner, 164 Eleventh Ave., at 22nd St. 869-3530.)

LONG RUNS

ANYTHING GOES: This exuberant revival is primarily a celebration of Cole Porter himself. The company, which includes Leslie Uggams, Bill McCutcheon, and Gregg Edelman, does more than justice to the words and score. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.) . . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.) . . . **A CHORUS LINE:** A group of young dancers audition for a handful of chorus jobs in a show not yet in rehearsal, and by the time the evening is over we know everything about all of them. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **THE COCKTAIL HOUR:** A dramatist returns home to break the news to his prosperous family that he has written a play about them and to ask their permission to have it produced. More easily said than done. A. R. Gurney's humor has never been more sparkling, his characters never more engaging. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313. Closes Aug. 20.) . . . **DRIVING MISS DAISY:** Frances Sternhagen and Earle Hyman star in Alfred Uhry's play, which tells of the growing attachment of a cranky old woman in Atlanta to her black chauffeur. Directed by Ron Lagomarsino. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 564-8038.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently turned twenty-nine. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.) . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1989:** A source of continual merriment, this revue is a cluster of parodies of shows along the Great White Way. Gerard Alessandrini conceived and directed it and wrote the witty, barbed lyrics. The performers are Toni DiBuono, Dorothy Kiara, David B. McDonald, and Michael McGrath. (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.) . . . **I COULD GO ON LIP-SYNCHING!:** This one-man variety show made up of cultural arcana is kind of weird, kind of quirky, and kind of brilliant. Performed by John Epperson and written by him and Justin Ross (who directed), it uses the rhetorical tactics of drag theatre to attack some of the Big Questions, managing not so much to raise lip-synching to an art as to transform aural montage into psychodrama. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556) . . . **INTO THE WOODS:** This musical by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine is an attempt to show what lurks beneath the surface of conventional fairy tales. The songs are beautiful or funny—sometimes both. Directed by Mr. Lapine. The cast includes Ellen Foley and Chip Zien. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 246-6363.) . . . **M. BUTTERFLY:** David Henry Hwang's funny, mysterious, and often beautiful play, with John Rubinstein. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 246-0220.) . . . **ME AND MY GIRL:** An infelicitously rehabilitated British musical out of the thirties. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 246-0102.) . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.) . . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.) . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** The much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **RUMORS:** This farce about a party to celebrate a couple's tenth anniversary (the host and hostess are mysteriously absent) may well be the funniest play that Neil Simon has written. It is acted to perfection by Ron Leibman, Joyce Van Patten, Charles Brown, and Cynthia Darlow, under the impeccable direction of Gene Saks. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.) . . . **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** This first play by Robert Harling is set in a beauty shop in a small town in Louisiana and consists mainly of the often amusing, wisecracking chatter of the proprietress, her assistant, and four steady customers. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 246-0102.)

DRY

New York this summer has felt more like Seattle in winter—rain, rain, rain. For a quick antidote, there is "Rain of Talent: Umbrella Art," now at the American Craft Museum. The show's organizers sent more than thirty ordinary umbrellas to artists around the country—artists who don't normally work in this medium—with the request that they be returned as works of art. The results are a complete transformation, from rain shields to bumbershoots. Rhonda Zwillinger shows a perfectly impractical beauty—frame only—adorned with pastel pearls and glimmering rhinestones. Close by, a plain-looking work by Buster Simpson seems unaltered, except that it's been dipped in litmus and left out in the rain. (It turned acid-pink.) And Dennis Evans' offering, "The Seattle Umbrella: for those who spend long hours in the RAIN," has a book dangling from each rib.

But the work that earns the most attention sits downstairs. Edward Henderson's piece, a canvas umbrella that extends from the top of a small schoolhouse chair, is a marvel of craftsmanship, and very affecting: its childlike tone invites you to reflect on times when you welcomed the rain—times when it didn't seem like such a bad idea to run around without an umbrella.

DANCE

A SMALL but persistent feature of the Kirov Ballet's historic Met season was the magical way that famous dancers kept materializing whenever one said something about "The Sleeping Beauty." There was an afternoon when a group of balletomanes were standing by the orchestra-level bar, discussing various productions of the ballet. One person reverently invoked a great Kirov Aurora, Irina Kolpakova, and suddenly, as if she'd shot up through a trapdoor, there was Kolpakova in the pink, introducing herself to a circle of dropped jaws. We asked a seatmate one night how plans were going for "The Sleeping Beauty" being prepared by the New York City Ballet; at that moment, Peter Martins walked down the aisle with the School of American Ballet's Stanley Williams. Another night, in the press room, we began to muse about a "Sleeping Beauty" on ice; a rarely used door flew open and in glided John Curry. (We also heard about a colleague's whistling part of the "Bluebird" pas de deux in the press room and finding himself face to face with Natalia Makarova.) By the last of the Kirov's five "Beauty" performances we had managed to call up approximately twenty stars, a rate of success four hundred times greater than our ability to get cabs to take us home to Brooklyn nightly without a big argument.

Our most extravagant triumph came during an intermission of the "Beauty" starring Galina Mezentseva and Yevgeni Neff. We decided to chance telepathy. "What would Rudolf Nureyev say about this performance?" we thought. And there, moving up the aisle, not two feet away from us, was Nureyev, with cheekbones, schoolboy's cap, and self-confidence intact. A gentleman we didn't know greeted him, saying, "I saw the Kirov in 'Sleeping Beauty' thirty years ago!" "I danced in it thirty years ago," Nureyev answered, softly. "But I remember that it used to be more vibrant," the man volleyed back. "Ah," said Nureyev, flexing his eyebrows, "that must have been because you saw mine."

IN TOWN

Feld Ballet—A one-week engagement. Aug. 7-8 and Aug. 11-12, at 8: "Ah Scarlatti" (preview), "The Gods Amused," "Kore," and "The Jig Is Up." . . . ¶ Aug. 9-10 at 8, and Aug. 12 at 3: "Excursions," "Medium:Rare," "Danzon Cubano," and "Skara Brae." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

Pilar Rioja—Seven performances of classical Spanish dance, including flamenco. "Café de Chinitas," "La Farruca," and "Tres Danzas de Surinach" are on the bill. (Repertorio Español, Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850. Aug. 7-9 and Aug. 11 at 8; Aug. 12 at 3 and 8; and Aug. 13 at 7.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Aug. 8-12: Ballet Chicago, directed by Daniel Duell. . . . ¶ Starting Aug. 15: The Hubbard Street Dance Company. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

Saratoga Performing Arts Center—Aug. 8-13: The Hubbard Street Dance Company. (Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 1-518 587-3330.)

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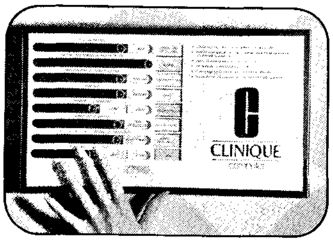

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NIGHT LIFE

BLACKENED catfish and other Cajun dishes are by now familiar to most New Yorkers, but zydeco music, another Louisianan import, is less widely known here. Loup Garou, a local zydeco group, is trying to remedy this situation. The band was founded a few years ago by native Louisianan James Macdonell, and it has enjoyed a steady rise in popularity ever since. We saw Loup Garou at the Lone Star Roadhouse the other night (they'll also be playing every Thursday at Delta 88, starting August 17), and the first thing we noticed was the band's distinctive look. Macdonell, who sings and plays the accordion, is a tall, thin, ponytailed young man whose watermelon-size instrument seems ready to send him toppling at any moment. Then there's the rubboard player, El Pantalones, a compact, neatly dressed young man who, jumping around the stage and strumming the ribbed metal contraption strapped to his chest, looks like an umpire on amphetamines.

Zydeco, which is sung in French as well as English, reflects the peculiar cultural makeup of Louisiana—it's a blend of West Indian rhythms, French folk music, traditional Irish fiddle tunes, rural American blues, and urban funk. Above all, it's infectious dance music, driven by the alternately wistful and lighthearted sound of the accordion. We spoke to Macdonell after the show, and he told us that the band plays Creole-style zydeco, as opposed to Cajun-style. "The Creole tunes have a harder, funkier sound," he said. "Cajun songs are mostly waltzes, and you can't play waltzes all night to a New York audience."

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which bold-face type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek cabaret on the edge of Chelsea, near the flower and fur markets. **JOHNNIE RAY,** the big-emotions singer who was known in the fifties for a couple of weepies—"Cry," "Little White Cloud That Cried"—performs in a rhythm-and-blues vein through Aug. 19.

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—A glitzy, color-coördinated jazz house, designed for maximum seating efficiency, where blue-suspendered waitresses sweep by your table bearing shrimp cocktails, champagne, and other trappings of the good life. After the show, out-of-towners flock to the upstairs souvenir shop, where, at last check, Blue Note golf balls were still available. Aug. 8-13 belongs to **KOKO TAYLOR'S** blues outfit, and beginning Aug. 15 **RAY CHARLES** will be here with his namesake entourage—the Raelettes & the Ray Charles orchestra. Music from nine. Dining.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A Village bar that has long featured first-rate piano-bass teams and pro conversationalists and that now also features Bradley's T-shirts, Bradley's sweatshirts, Bradley's customized coasters, a person to take an admission fee, and a person to seat you and shush you. It's an institution. Pianist **RICHIE BEIRACH,** a classical-minded jazzman, performs through Aug. 12; **WALTER DAVIS,** who once gave up the piano to be a tailor, then thought better of it, comes in with bassist **SANTI DEBRIANO** on Aug. 13; and pianist **PETE MALINVERNI** gets started on Aug. 14. Music from nine-forty-five. Dining.

CAT CLUB, 76 E. 13th St. (505-0090)—This room, which caters to thrash-metal buffs and cooler heads on weeknights, opens its doors on Sundays to swing-music fans, most of whom come to Lindy. Feet jitter, skirts fly, and a limber, nattily dressed gent gets a look on his face that says "Watch my next move, darlin'." Up by the stage, two men who have come stag scatter their feet when the band breaks into "Jumpin' at the Woodside." The New York Swing Dance Society organizes these Sunday-night meetings. Music from eight to midnight.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—In the late seventies and early eighties, this dark cave was the hub of a thriving punk-music scene. Local rock has since diminished, but while other clubs of the era have fizzled, CB's perseveres, and young hopefuls continue to fill the stage nightly. Music from nine-thirty on Sundays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

DELTA 88, 332 Eighth Ave., at 26th St. (924-3499)—A pleasant hangout for white-collar trash, where you'll find cold Dixie beer, collard greens, and plenty of men who know how to wear a leather vest. As if that weren't enough, the bar-and-restaurant also features a corrugated-tin ceiling and a truckload of sort-of-Southern items: a photo booth, a giant Amoco sign, an Evel Knievel lunchbox. Most nights, the buffet turns into a bandstand at nine, with, for instance, gospel on Mondays and blues on Tuesdays. Sometimes, if you're lucky, you'll hear authentic country songs about Queens. Shows after nine. Chicken-fried steak, deep-fried crawdads (a.k.a. Cajun popcorn), and other exotic Southern fare.

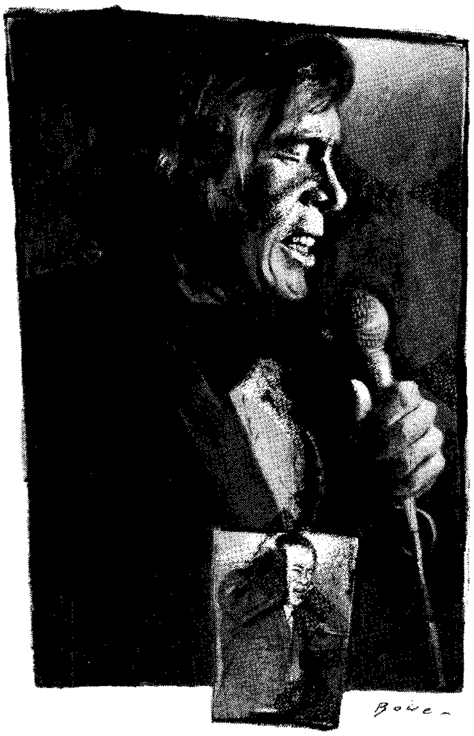
FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—A low-ceilinged, belowstairs jazz room, its walls decorated with alternating bands of mirror and red plush, which will seem intimate to some people and too intimate to tall people, who may want to remove their top hats before entering. **CHARLIE BYRD,** a guitarist versed in jazz, classical music (he studied with Segovia in the fifties), and Latin American music (his 1962 collaboration with Stan Getz, "Jazz Samba," introduced the bossa nova to American listeners), appears Aug. 8-13, with a trio. Next on the roster is trombonist **AL GREY,** who begins work on Aug. 15. Grey, a real pro with the rubber plunger mute, was for many years a star soloist in the Count Basie band. Mondays remain in the hands of **LES PAUL,** the guitarist, guitar-builder, and overdubbing pioneer. Music from eight. Dining.

J'S, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—A room where the tenth letter of the alphabet (uncapped and disguised as a quarter note) turns up often: on doors, window shades, matchbooks. It's also a room with a view (of Broadway) and with jazz (mostly of the mainstream type). The schedule: bassist **GARY HAASE** and his Conch Salad Band on Aug. 7 and Aug. 15; singer-pianist **FRANK UNDERWOOD** on Aug. 8; pianist **GENE BERTONCINI'S** trio on Aug. 9; seven-string guitarist **JOHN PIZZARELLI'S** trio on Aug. 10; singer **CARLA WHITE** on Aug. 11; **MICHAEL CARVIN,** an early practitioner of jazz-rock drumming, on Aug. 12, with a quartet; and bassist **LYNN SEATON'S** trio on Aug. 16. Music from eight Mondays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

JAN WALLMAN'S, 49 W. 44th St. (764-8930)—A room fit for a singer, an accompanist or two, and a party of forty-eight. **DAVID VAUGHAN** and **AL CARMINES** sing the lyrics of P. G. Wodehouse on Aug. 10; **BARBARA LEA** and **WES MC AFEE** claim Aug. 12; and **NANCY HARROW** sings with the **DICK KATZ** trio on Aug. 16. Pianist-singer **ARTHUR SIEGEL** flies all alone on Mondays. Shows at nine and eleven. Dining. Closed Sundays.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A second-floor music and performance space, where people come to ponder the meaning of harmolodics and the post-ness of postmodernism. The room is run by two amiable young guys from Wisconsin, whose views on such things as cover charges are enlightened. Aug. 7 belongs to Foreign Legion and the Lemmings; Aug. 8 to Nora York; and Aug. 9 to Jules Shear and Miracle Room. Spiral Jetty appears on Aug. 10; **KELVYNATOR** on Aug. 11; **CHRIS STAMEY** and **MIRACLE LEGION** on Aug. 12; and **GERRY HEMINGWAY'S** trio and Chris Cochrane on Aug. 15. Music after nine.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—Now New York's lone Lone Star. There's no lizard nesting on the roof, but there's more legroom, better sight lines, and fancier grub than there was at the old Fifth Avenue address. The façade is a Silver Eagle bus, the kind your itinerant musician tools around in. The inside is upscale roadhouse; it has a couple of postage-stamp dance floors and some real pretty Gibson guitars decorating the walls. On Aug. 10, the **VENTURES** relive some great moments of surf history, and on Aug. 11 the Texan singer and guitarist **JOHNNY COPELAND** leads the merrymaking. Ex-New York Doll **SYLVAIN SYLVAIN** takes the reins on Aug. 12. Music after nine. Dining.



Johnnie Ray at the Ballroom

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—A mid-Manhattan pub for well-heeled gents and their high-heeled foxes. It's not always easy to detect the music over the babble, but if you listen closely you should be able to hear **THELMA CARPENTER** and **HADDA BROOKS.** Carpenter was singing in Count Basie's band in the forties ("I Didn't Know About You," etc.)—about the same time Brooks was lighting her torch for Hollywood. Dining. Closed Sundays.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A big, cheerful room, painted a light tropical blue, where you can pick 'em up and set 'em down to sounds from Brazil, Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. Algerian singer Cheb Mami, a.k.a. the Prince of Rai, claims Aug. 8-9, followed by **YOMO TORO** on Aug. 10 and Martinique's Kali & Racine Aug. 11-12. The Senegalese singer and songwriter Baaba Maal begins an engagement on Aug. 15; also on the bill is Fatala, a ten-piece percussion group from Guinea. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Mondays.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—An itinerary stop for the international jazz groupies who, on any given night, can be seen roaming the streets of the Village. Up front, there's a glass-enclosed sidewalk café; in back is a larger room, with a pressed-tin ceiling, red brick, and more pinewood than a ski lodge. **ABDULLAH IBRAHIM & EKAYA** will get under way on Aug. 8. Ibrahim, an expatriate South African pianist, saxophonist, and flutist, serves up a bluesy, polyphonic mix of Monk and gospel and traditional African music. The electrified big band of the late Gil Evans, now under the able direction of his son, the trumpeter Miles Evans, is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

SWEETWATERS, 170 Amsterdam Ave., at 67th St. (873-4100)—Pink carnations on the tables, shrimp creole on the menu, a sunken dance floor with a "Saturday Night Fever" ball, and a house photographer who offers to take a picture of you and your lady. The stage, dominated by a white grand piano, is usually given over to soul and R. & B.; the audience shouts encouragement as the band sings about "doin' it all night long" and, a little later, about "taking care of that thing." There's a lively bar, too, separated from the dining room by tinted glass.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—The old Tramps, a small Irish pub on East 15th Street, closed its doors last year, and this new incarnation, located on a Chelsea block that's fast becoming an urban Disneyland (a pool hall, indoor miniature golf, a trendy all-night diner, Limelight around the corner), opened recently. The new place, about the size of a roller rink, has the converted-loft-space slickness much in evidence downtown lately, but the emphasis on solid rock and blues remains. **OTIS RUSH,** the masterly Chicago-blues guitarist and singer, takes the stage Aug. 11-12.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Perhaps the most famous basement in the world, now in its second half century, this establishment was once described by the late Max Gordon as "a good joint that people like to come to—thank God." Tenor saxophonist **DAVID MURRAY** leads a quartet—**JOHN HICKS** (piano), **RAY DRUMMOND** (bass), **ED BLACKWELL** (drums)—Aug. 8-13. Mondays are reserved for the **MEL LEWIS** big band. Music after ten.

ZANZIBAR & GRILL, 550 Third Ave., at 36th St. (779-0606)—A Murray Hill jazz resort, where the ceiling fans turn slowly, and the palm trees susurrate tropically, and the jukebox contains Xavier Cugat and Perez Prado, and a waiter, delivering a plate of fried chicken and maple-pear corn bread to a customer, sings "It's suppertime" (to the tune of "Summertime"). The professional musicians tend to come on at around nine. The Canadian vibraharpist **WARREN CHIASSON** and the vanguard bebop guitarist **CHUCK WAYNE,** both of whom served time with George Shearing's quintet (but never together), team up Aug. 8-9. Morris Goldberg, a member of Hugh Masekela's band, shows up on Aug. 10, with an unannounced guest. Trumpeter **SPANKY DAVIS** and his ensemble do their thing on Aug. 13.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A spacious, lightly forested bar and restaurant with an in-between room from which music issues, putting an end to some discussions and inspiring others. **JOHN BUNCH** mans the eighty-eight through Aug. 12, with bassist **STEVE LA SPINA;** pianist **RONNIE MATHEWS** and bassist **DAVID WILLIAMS** supplant them on Aug. 14. Music from eight weeknights. Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

ON the night of July 27, the Palladium had a "Woodstock reunion." At the same time as that event to recall a weekend on a farm twenty years ago, the columnist Stephen Saban was speaking at another club, King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. Later, Susanne Bartsch beckoned, among others, everyone who has ever worn black suspenders over a T-shirt to celebrate the first anniversary of her last-Thursday-of-the-month parties at the Copa. "Batman" had sizable lines for both the 7:15 and 9:50 showings at Cinema I. But the most startling events of the evening were provided by the weather.

The rain has poured down so regularly this summer that New York feels like the set for "Blade Runner"; and Ridley Scott's prophecy of perpetual urban precipitation appears to be coming true.

The twenty-seventh was one of those spectacular summer nights when lightning seems to join the sky to the pavement, lighting up buildings as if they were fifties Sylvania HaloLight TV sets, with luminous frames around the picture tubes. Central Park turned into a black-paper silhouette. The Washington Square Arch seemed thicker, the cast-iron cornices of buildings along Sixth Ave-

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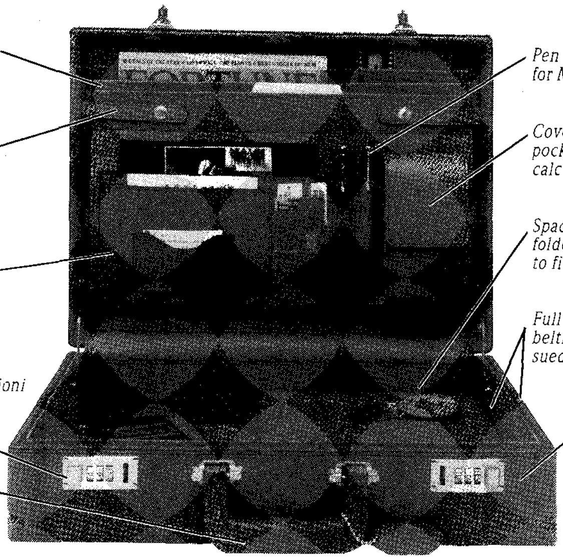

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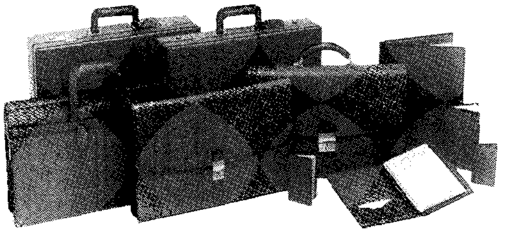

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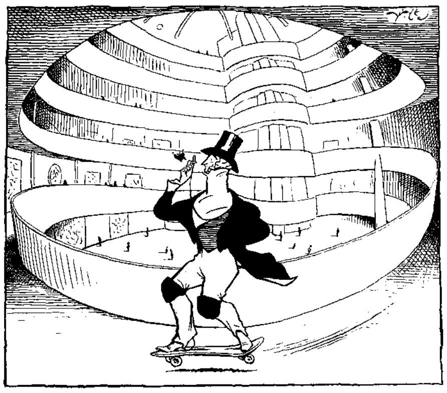
nue in the Twenties sparked as if they'd just been hit by John Henry's hammer, and several times, for a millisecond, people in the streets looked like George Segal sculptures.

A blinding flash caused a couple to part. He stopped short and stared heavenward, unaware that she had continued; she marvelled out loud, oblivious of his absence. And in front of Macy's a bolt as gleaming and straight as Doug Fairbanks' sword surprised another couple, who'd been absorbed kissing in the rain, causing them to jump, though they kept right on kissing. The only person who consistently gets that kind of lift in a club anymore is Susanne Bartsch, but that's because she wears platform shoes.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

Shimmer—A play by John O'Keefe about two boys who escape from a reformatory during the nineteen-fifties. The playwright has cast himself in every role. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 246-0102.)

P.S. 122—Aug. 10-13 at 9:30: Penny Arcade impersonates many different types of New Yorkers. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Aug. 11-13 at 9:30: The Ridge Theatre in "The End of Business as Usual," a play about media consultants who are kidnapped by crack dealers. Through Aug. 27. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)



ART

"Nature's Mirror," an exhibition of mostly English and Victorian botanical illustrations on display at the Public Library until September 2, provides a beautiful and profound demonstration of how fact becomes art through love. Most of the show's images first appeared in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, the "Jane's Fighting Ships" of the flower world. For two hundred years, *Curtis's* has been not only an encyclopedia of horticulture but also an almanac of all the things that flowers mean to people: the flower as ornament, as scientific evidence, as commodity, as symbolic form. The library and the New York Botanical Garden have supplemented these English prints with material from their own large collections of botanical prints, most of them American and French. Though they emerge from a tradition of scrupulous scientific observation, the flower pictures here are almost comically national: a hyacinth pictured by the incomparable French artist Pierre-Joseph Redouté has the wistful attenuation and the delicacy of a Fragonard heroine; and Walter Hood Fitch's *Victoria amazonica*, a water lily named after the Queen, has the fatuous complacency of a Landseer matron.

But the English nineteenth-century images are the glory of the show. William Jackson Hooker's work, in particular, combines a fanatical and self-effacing attention to the truthful depiction of each petal and stamen with an amazing flair for over-all design: the flower as both individual and icon. There's nothing wistfully ephemeral in the exhibition's Victorian images. With their constant, shaping dialogue between the description of a particular petal and the discovery of a larger pattern, they have the delicate rigor of real science; one recalls that the seemingly cozy and self-enclosed English naturalist's world that produced these images produced Darwin, too.

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MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—A lovely display of Chinese landscape paintings from the Ming (1368-1644) and Ch'ing (1644-1911) dynasties. The exhibition indicates that the concept of "selling out" is hardly unique to the Warhol era: the Ming *paintings contrast professional court* painters, who were realistic and monumental, with amateur scholar-painters, who valued experimentation, the development of personalized style, and detachment from the worldly demands of officialdom. The show also demonstrates that abstraction is not a Western invention: the Ch'ing paintings display a high degree of it, with their flattened compositions and exploitation of the "cinematic" panning inherent in the form of the scroll. Some of the Ch'ing ink-dot landscapes are positively Pollock. Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ Thirty-six of Lucas Samaras's works on paper from the museum's collection are on view in the Berggruen Klee Gallery of the Wallace wing (the Klee works that are usually there are at the Tate Gallery for the summer). Through Sept. 5. . . . ¶ "Apropos Aprons," a presentation of the Costume Institute, considers not the workaday item but *apron extremes—extremely ornate examples* from eighteenth-century Europe, and the extremely short Rudi Gernreich mini (1967), not to mention the Egyptian noblewoman's funerary apron, and various loincloths, girdles, pinafores, and pendant sashes. Through Sept. 3. . . . ¶ An exhibition comparing photographs of the sixties with photographs of the eighties, including works by Duane Michals, Cindy Sherman, and the Starn Twins. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Tuesday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Twenty-five sculptures and fifteen drawings by Christopher Wilmarth (1943-87). A compact and exceptionally discomfiting retrospective. The artist's green-glass structures from the late sixties and seventies are elegant but utterly mute. The late work—mostly bronze wall reliefs with ovoid etched-glass "heads"—offers about as despairing a vision of the self as you are likely to find. Through Aug. 20. (A complementary show is at Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.) . . . ¶ A Helen Frankenthaler retrospective, *ranging from the artist's stained,* vaguely Orientalist fifties paintings through her mid-sixties color-field work to some exquisite abstracts of this decade, such as "Casanova" and "Scarlatti." Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ "California Photography: Remaking Make-Believe." An exhibition of forty-five recent works by John Baldessari, Nancy Barton, Jo Ann Callis, John Divola, Robert Heinecken, Larry Johnson, and Larry Sultan. All of the artists reside in California. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ Photographs by Aaron Siskind from the permanent collection. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The current installation from the permanent collection emphasizes the museum's superb, specialized holdings in nonobjective European art. . . . ¶ Also on display from the permanent collection is an enormous circle of red-slate fragments, assembled by the peripatetic English artist Richard Long—a poetic sort of walker. Long, who has a way of making atavistic practices speak to us in sophisticated terms, came to town recently to install four other pieces—two involving words, and another his handprints. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays, 11 to 7:45, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 4:45.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—A show of oils, watercolors, prints, and drawings by Edward Hopper. The hundred and fifty works span the artist's career, and are drawn from the museum's collection. . . . ¶ "Art in Place" is a thematically arranged show of three hundred works that have entered the permanent collection over the past fifteen years. They range from a 1901 watercolor by Maurice Prendergast to a 1988 aluminum sculpture by John Newman. (Open Tuesdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Andrew Wyeth: The Helga Pictures." Through Sept. 18. . . . ¶ "Hispanic Art in the United States: Thirty Contemporary Painters & Sculptors." . . . Concurrent with the Hispanic show is a forceful lobby installation by Alfredo Jaar, a Chilean artist living in New York. It consists of light boxes that look like black beams edged in photographic transparencies of United States civil-rights protesters, including picketers carrying signs that read "I *AM* A MAN" and a young black man with part of his face done up in white makeup. The artfully haphazard arrangement of beams argues effectively for anti-authoritarianism in both life and art. Through Sept. 4. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 10 to 5.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—A display of Saudi Arabian dress in which traditional *thawbs*, for instance, are seen alongside a cloak that belonged to King Faisal. (Open Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, 10 to 5:45; Wednesdays, 10 to 9; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St.—George Nakashima: Fifty-four pieces of furniture produced by this master woodworker since 1944. Through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ "Rain of Talent: Umbrella Art" consists of some thirty umbrellas, altered by a variety of artists and suspended in the main stairwell. Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 8, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—The most recent installation of works from the exemplary collection of John D. Rockefeller 3rd (the society's initial benefactor) highlights fine Chinese and Japanese porcelains, such as a grouping of small translucent celadon bowls and a large Ming water jar depicting fish swimming among aquatic plants. There are also Hindu and Buddhist sculptures, mostly from India, and particularly enthralling are several Khmer stone statues, with their idealized naturalism, classically smooth surfaces, and utterly placid serenity masking what was a brutal warrior society. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse—Red Grooms. His work is about as close as art gets to real entertainment, and his graphic work—the subject of this exhibition—is no exception. Included are some delightful three-dimensional lithographs that resemble permanently opened pop-up books. Through Sept. 10. . . . ¶ Sculptor Mierle Laderman Ukeles is showing works made with recycled materials—crushed soda cans, pulped Christmas trees, and shredded Wella Balsam containers. Through Sept. 4. (Open weekdays, except Fridays, 10 to 4:30; Sundays, 11 to 4:30.)

COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"Polished Perfection: The Art of Turned-Wood Bowls." In the nineteen-thirties and forties, almost as an afterthought to the Industrial Revolution, factory mass production displaced the artisan and his lathe in the creation of wood bowls. This show, of eighty works by twenty-one contemporary North American craftsmen (along with four bowls by four unknown Early American settlers), proves that the artisanal tradition has survived. . . . ¶ Drawings and watercolors of Rome, in all its grandeur (and disintegration). The works, which range from the Renaissance to the early Romantic era, are travelling for the first time outside the Vatican Library. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

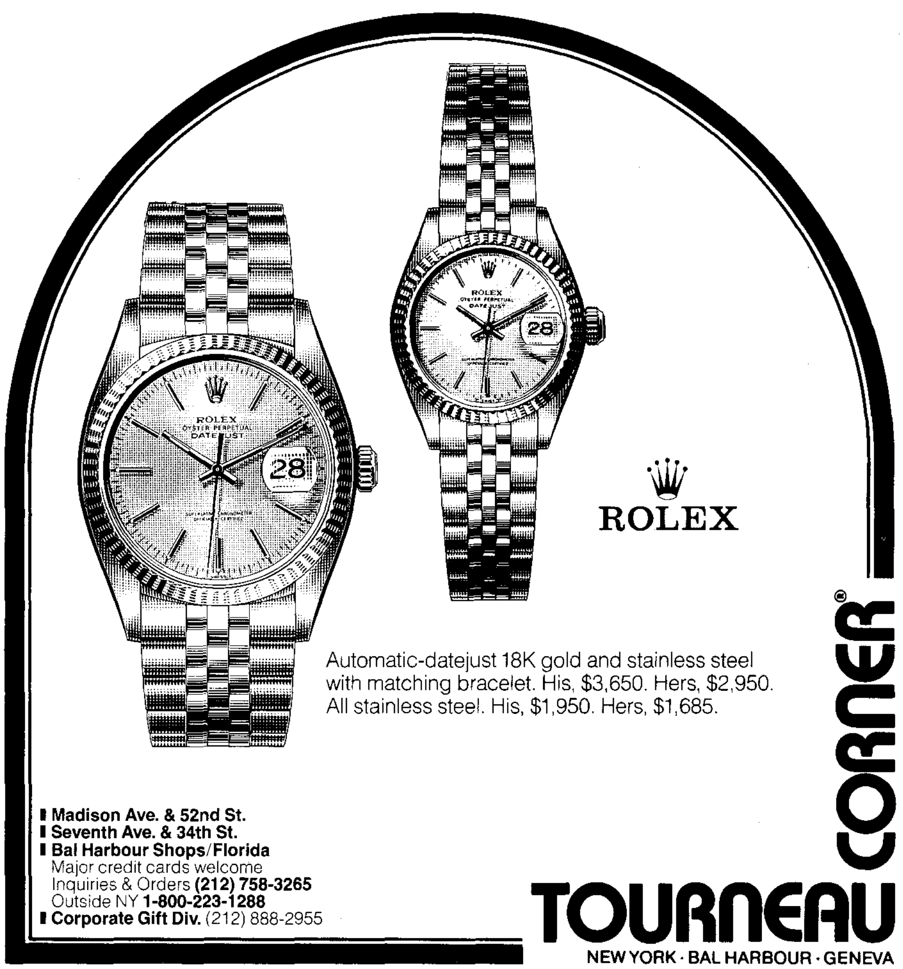
JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St.—"Exodus and Exile: 2,000 Years in Ancient Israel," an archeological exhibition tracing some of the cultural shifts and political cataclysms between 1200 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. that, bit by bit, transformed the Israelite kingdom into an international religious community—the birth, in short, of Jewish identity in the modern sense. A few objects, such as ancient synagogue reliefs, and mosaics, have not been seen in this country before, and while they represent a fragmented and elusive story, the show's attractive, playful installation is informative. (Open Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, noon to 5; Tuesdays, noon to 8, with no admission charge from 5 to 8; Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MORGAN LIBRARY, 29 E. 36th St.—"Words of Blood, Images of Fire," a tribute to the French Revolution, includes Robespierre's holograph of a speech Saint-Just gave attacking Danton; a sketch (attributed to David) of Robespierre on the day of his execution; and letters, more speeches, and memoranda. Through Aug. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF AMERICAN FOLK ART, 2 Lincoln Square (entrance on Columbus Ave. between 65th and 66th Sts.)—"Stitched from the Soul: Slave Textiles from the Ante-Bellum South." This fascinating exhibition demonstrates that slaves preserved fragments of their African heritage in their quilts by combining native patterns, colors, and appliqué techniques with requisite Euro-American motifs. This display of quilts is double-edged: the most delicate ones were made by slaves for their mistresses, with whom they were often drawn into close and complicated relationships, while quiltmaking by slaves for their own use formed a center of their social life; some pieces were the products of forced labor, others offered slave men and women their only opportunity to record their existence. Through Sept. 17. (Open daily, 9 to 9.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—The Berg Collection has mounted a presentation of mostly letters and manuscripts in which poets and novelists from Chaucer to Bellow ruminate on love and death. (Berg Collection Exhibition Room. Open daily, except Thursdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.) . . . ¶ Botanical illustrations from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Through Sept. 2. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall. Open daily, except Sundays, 10 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM, 144 W. 125th St.—This first retrospective of the well-regarded African-American painter Hughie Lee-Smith includes some moving and unusual portraits of isolation, made in the fifties, that call to mind Marsh, Tooker, and the early Guston; and sixties works depicting isolated figures next to metal poles with colored ribbons flapping from them. In the seventies and eighties, the subtle surrealist cast fades and a relatively ordinary urban realism remains. . . . ¶ Graphics and installations that incorporate photography, the work of fifteen contemporary artists. Both shows through Sept. 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)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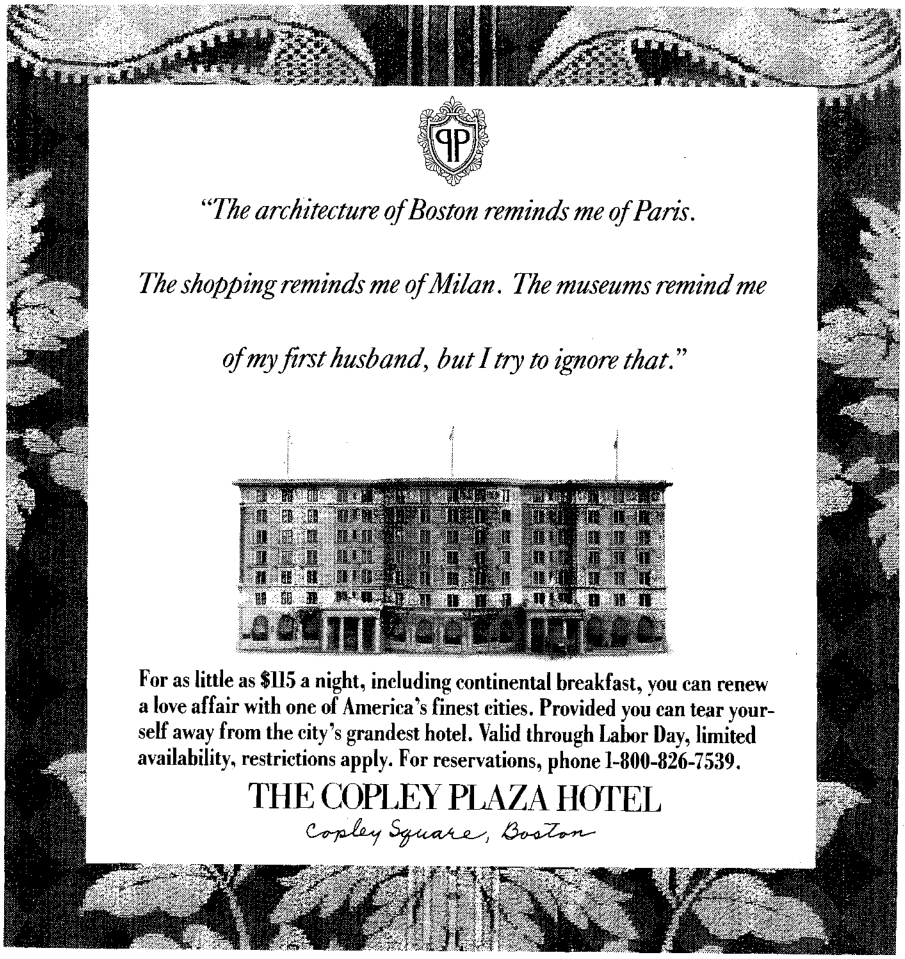
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The shopping reminds me of Milan. The museums remind me

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ART–Cont'd

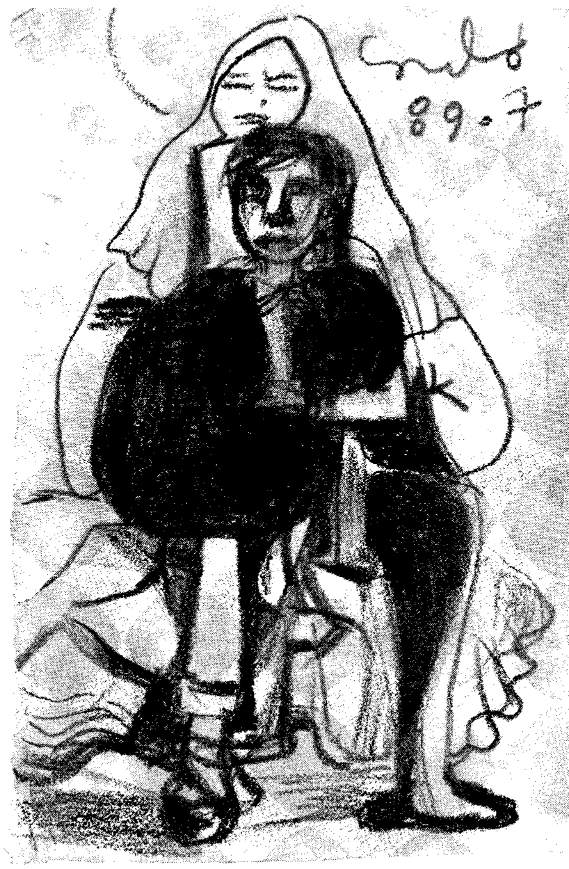
GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

CHRISTOPHER WILMARTH (1943-87)—This exhibition is a coda to the MOMA retrospective, with an emphasis on drawings rather than sculptures. The early-seventies paper pieces with folds and staples are especially good—sensuous and succinct. The later, figurative works are sometimes powerful but suggest an acrid emotionalism. Through Aug. 20. (Hirschl & Adler Modern, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St.)

SCULPTURE & COLOR, PART II—The sculpture "The Opera of Silence," by Mel Chin, includes a wood carving of a man who is bound and armless, and who laboriously props up a huge sunken tom-tom drum. The piece is an eloquent defense of the currently unfashionable but nonetheless very American tradition of wood carving, a medium that is favored by many of the young as well as the established artists in this show. Through Aug. 15. (Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.)

"CHINA—JUNE 4, 1989..."—The Asian American Arts Centre has responded to the brutal military force used against protesting students in Tiananmen Square with a video program of television news documentaries in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin; an exhibition of vivid photographs of the student hunger strike and subsequent violence; and an evolving "Artist Wall," a folding screen that is being made from doors and decorated by interested artists. The most compelling work on it thus far looks like a metal prison door with a map of China behind a barred window. Through Sept. 29. (26 Bowery.)


Self-portrait by George Condo

GROUP SHOWS—At the **ALEXANDER,** 59 Wooster St.: A show of landscape paintings that includes a number of interesting works—Sylvia Plimack Mangold's depiction of a breezy, feathery mass of trees, for example, which has luscious paint scraped about its surface and is edged in the artist's signature faux masking tape; and Robin Winters' large enigmatic landscape that is stratified in the manner of the stepped Mayan-like pyramid atop it. Among others represented are Robert Bordo and Louisa Chase. Through Aug. 11.... **FEATURE,** 484 Broome St.: An exhibition called "Romancing the Stone" that includes perplexing abstractions by Christopher Sasser, and Michael Banicki's nonsensically rational gridded dot paintings, which map the artist's very personal rating system for artists. Through Aug. 11.... **FORUM,** 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.: Contemporary realist paintings are combined with a few gems of early American modernism, particularly by Max Weber, one of the New York Cubists. One of his paintings, "Suspense," depicts Cubistic figures pushed to the front of a dark and ordinary room; they lie about, as if waiting for Godot. Through Aug. 25.... **HERSTAND,** 24 W. 57th St.: This hodgepodge of twentieth-century sculpture (with one from the late nineteenth century) seems to lack a historical point. But it does include some stunning bronzes, particularly an animated Rosso bust of a laughing child, a proto-Cubist 1906 Picasso nude, and Brancusi's recumbent head of a sleeping child (1908). The postwar sculptures are not as well selected; among them are some theatrical bronzes by the contemporary artist Ann McCoy. Through Oct. 14.... **KNOEDLER,** 19 E. 70th St.: Suffocating, perfumed elegance by such artists as Motherwell, Stella, Rauschenberg, and Heizer is, sadly, in great abundance here. Through Sept. 11.... **LENNON, WEINBERG,** 580 Broadway: Works on paper by Joan Mitchell, Willem de Kooning, John Chamberlain, Brice Marden, Malcolm Morley, Louise Fishman, Donald Lipski, Chuck Connelly, Catherine Murphy, and H. C. Westermann. Lipski—always peculiar—and the weird, wondrous Westermann deliver interesting quirks. Through Aug. 11.... **MARCUS,** 578 Broadway: This show of gallery artists displays parallel preferences: a cool and poetic strain of narrative paintings that contain obscured commentaries about modernist image-making, most successfully embodied by the work of Mark Tansey; and a less compelling variety of restrained, handwrought sculptures, most of them with slight sexual allusions—with the exception of the work of Not Vital, a Swiss artist whose sculpture is warm and expansive. Through Aug. 25.... **MARLBOROUGH,** 40 W. 57th St.: A big sampler of mostly gallery artists, many represented by work with a summer theme. Of these, Larry Rivers' two portraits—of a jazz musician naked in his hot hotel room, and of a woman in shorts lolling languorously on a porch—make the best, sultriest point. Through Sept. 16.... **PACE,** 32 E. 57th St.: "Sculpture by Painters," many of whom are gallery artists, including Condo, de Kooning, Dine, Dubuffet, Johns, Kelly, Lichtenstein, Miró, Morley, Newman, Picasso, Schnabel, Twombly, and Warhol. Condo, who is new to the medium, makes an auspicious début in this handsome exhibition. Through Sept. 1.... **GALERIE ST. ETIENNE,** 24 W. 57th St.: A show honoring Otto Kallir, the founder of the Galerie St. Etienne, as much for his pioneering exhibitions of the Austrian Expressionists as for his fascination with the documentation of this century's profound events. In addition to a gorgeous watercolor of a girl by Emil Nolde, an intense self-portrait by the little-known Richard Gerstl (whose work Kallir discovered after the artist committed suicide at age twenty-five), and some fascinating paintings by the composer Arnold Schoenberg, we see Charles Lindbergh's application for an airplane license, Robert E. Peary's telegram confirming the "discovery" of the North Pole, and written recollections of Adolf Hitler, the artist, by Reinhold Hanisch. Hanisch sold Hitler's watercolors in the teens, and in the thirties was Kallir's restorer, prior to the dealer's flight from his native Austria. Through Sept. 8. (Closed Mondays.)... **WASHBURN,** 41 E. 57th St.: This gallery celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the New York World's Fair with a group of American paintings made circa 1939. The show is dominated by geometric and biomorphic abstractions that owe a great deal to Europe. Much of the work is attractive and thoughtful, often dryly so. Included are an interesting David Smith painting and a huge canvas of a W.P.A. mural by Ilya Bolotowsky, which demonstrates Klee-like whimsy on a grand scale. There's also an appealing Alice Trumbull Mason, which has a little brushy fire that suggests the more assertive America soon to come Through Aug. 31.... **WEBER,** 142 Greene St.: Members of what we are meant to see as two generations of conceptual artists are united in this summer gathering. The oldies take the cake: Sol LeWitt's white box structure from the seventies, Daniel Buren's "A Frame in a Frame in a Frame for a Frame"—a site-specific wall piece of asymmetrically arranged yellow beach-awning stripes against a slate-colored wall—and Hamish Fulton's framed photographs of wildernesses where he walked, are very elegant works, each quite coolly sublime in its way. Works in mixed media by Franz Erhard Walther, Wallace & Donohue, Massimo Antonaci, and Magdalena Jetelová—the younger guard—look pretty good, too, but a little gimmicky and unfocussed by comparison. Also, in the small gallery, there are several beautiful prints by Robert Ryman, theologist of colors white. Through Aug. 25.... **YORK,** 21 E. 65th St.: The York's main gallery is given over to stiff and provincial American landscape and figurative paintings of the nineteenth century, but the entranceway is devoted to work from the early twentieth century that displays a more engaged idea of culture: an ink sketch of New York by Stuart Davis, a watercolor of a house in the snow by Charles Burchfield, a painting of a lively urban crowd by Guy Pène du Bois, a brooding still-life by Marsden Hartley, and a composition of interlocking trapezoids by Charles Shaw. Through Sept. 1.... **ZABRISKIE,** 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.: In this grouping of contemporary sculptures, Marja Vallila's portable steel altars with cast-iron twigs and rocks look stilted, and Tom Bills' rusted-steel-and-lead sculptures look like little more than crotches on his nicely crafted tables. Only Mia Westerlund Roosen holds the imagination, with her pounded-lead abstractions. Through Aug. 13.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"INVENTION AND CONTINUITY IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS" is too big a title for the current show at the Metropolitan Museum. It promises more than this kind of exhibition can deliver. What's really on display is a small selection of work, some of it strong and some as unsubtle as the curatorial method that has systematized the images into three obvious categories—such as "Images from Images," a phrase as full of discovery with regard to photography as Streisand's "people who need people" is with regard to... people. It's always a pleasure to see the work of Robert Cumming, Harry Callahan, and Cindy Sherman, to name a few of the artists represented, but this exhibition reveals nothing more about their photography.

However, the people who are furious at Andy Warhol for what he said about them in his "Diaries" might feel better if they went to this show. Among the selections is a work Warhol made from some self-portraits he did with the aid of a photo booth and, as usual, a helper—who can't be identified because all of him that's visible is an extra pair of arms and hands. Two of the three strips show these hands giving Warhol exactly what many of his ex-friends feel he deserves: in one it looks as though Warhol's ears are being boxed; in the other he's getting a punch in the nose and a slug in the jaw.

Sidney D. Gamble (1890-1968)—A small selection of photographs from the thousands that the artist shot in China between 1917 and 1932. Gamble spent many years in China trying to understand it, writing about it, and taking pictures. This exhibition shows an observer who was interested in capturing both tradition and change. Through Sept. 9. (China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St.—Photographs and a video by six artists—Sophie Calle, Sarah Charlesworth, Donigan Cumming, Dieter Froese, Allan McCollum, and Angela Neuke—who concentrate on contemporary culture via work that explores the impact of the mass media, technology, and photojournalism. Through Sept. 3. (Tuesdays, noon to 8; Wednesdays through Fridays, noon to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

Short List—**ROBERT SHEEHAN,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through Aug. 25); **AARON SISKIND,** Museum of Modern Art (through Oct. 10); **SHADOWS AND SILHOUETTES,** Seagram Building, fourth floor, 375 Park Ave. (through Aug. 31); **TUTAVOH: LEARNING THE HOPI WAY,** Museum of the American Indian, Broadway at 155th St.

MUSIC

EARLY in this decade, Lewis Lockwood, of Harvard, laid plans for a series of musical monographs to be issued under his general editorship by Oxford University Press. The best minds in musicology would be enlisted. With whom should the proud series begin? Beethoven, naturally. Professor Lockwood turned to Philip Gossett, of the University of Chicago, who, in the nineteen-seventies, had done brilliant and innovative work with the sketches of the "Pastoral Symphony," and asked him to write on that work.

Imagine Professor Lockwood's astonishment when Professor Gossett informed him that he had decided to write neither on the "Pastoral Symphony" nor on Beethoven but on an opera by Gaetano Donizetti! When historical musicology was first reaching its maturity as a serious discipline, about a century ago, critics and analysts were inclined to disparage Verdi for triviality and cliché; of their thoughts about his humbler predecessor Donizetti there is scarcely a record, but it is safe to say that that is because they found him beneath contempt, not beyond praise.

But, as operagoers know—and now musicologists, too—things have been changing. Donizetti's work is taken seriously (there is even a *Donizetti Society Journal*): different versions of his texts are debated; new discoveries among his vast oeuvre are treated as front-page news; dozens of forgotten operas have been exhumed. Since he was a singer's composer par excellence, it is fitting that it was a singer who forced this reëvaluation: Maria Callas. Her historic revival of "Anna Bolena" at La Scala in 1957, though she sang only twelve performances of the opera, unquestionably got the ball rolling. That opera—the subject of Professor Gossett's book "'Anna Bolena' and the Artistic Maturity of Gaetano Donizetti"—will return to the repertoire of the New York City Opera on August 9, in the first of a series of performances. Marilyn Mims is the soprano who will measure herself against Callas on this occasion; Scott Bergeson will conduct.

IN TOWN

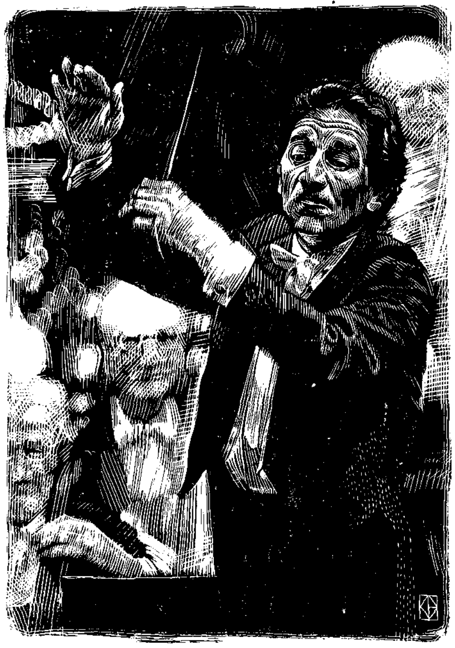
New York City Opera—**IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA,** with Patricia Spence, Rebecca Russell, Ron Peo, and Michael Cousins; conducted by Sergiu Comissiona. (Aug. 8 at 8.) . . . **ANNA BOLENA,** with Marilyn Mims, Mimi Lerner, Paul Hartfield, and Harry Dworchak; Scott Bergeson. (Aug. 9 and Aug. 15 at 8.) . . . **THE MIKADO,** with Christine Donahue, Muriel Costa-Greenspon, Mark Beudert, and James Billings; Peter Howard. (Aug. 10 at 8.) . . . **MADAME BUTTERFLY,** with Louisa Jonason, Jane Shaulis, Stephen O'Mara, and William Parcher; Imre Pallo. (Aug. 11 at 8.) . . . **MEFISTOFELE,** with Frances Ginsberg, John Cheek, and Robert Grayson; Sergiu Comissiona. (Aug. 12 at 2.) . . . **CARMEN,** with Wendy White, Margaret Cusack, John Absalom, and Kenneth Shaw; Hal France. (Aug. 12 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO,** with Joan Gibbons, Janis Eckhart, Mark Rucker, and Jon Garrison; Scott Bergeson. (Aug. 13 at 1.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Renée Fleming, Gail Dobish, Jon Garrison, Thomas Woodman, and Stanley Wexler; Chris Nance. (Aug. 16 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

Mostly Mozart Festival—Aug. 8-9 at 8: Gerard Schwarz conducting the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, with Shura Cherkassky, piano, and Paul Tortelier, cello. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 8: Roger Norrington conducting the London Classical Players in an all-Beethoven program. . . . ¶ Aug. 11-12 at 8: Gerard Schwarz conducting the festival orchestra in operatic works by Mozart. With Erie Mills and Andrea Matthews, sopranos; Laura Brooks Rice, mezzo-soprano; Jake Gardner, baritone; and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 7:30 and Aug. 14 at 8: Trevor Pinnock conducting an all-Vivaldi program, with Nancy Argenta and Ingrid Attrot, sopranos; Jean Stilwell, mezzo-soprano; Simon Standage, violin; and the Mostly Mozart Festival Chorus. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 8: The Tokyo String Quartet, with Ralph Kirshbaum, cello, and Jon Kimura Parker, piano. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 8: George Cleve conducting the festival orchestra, with Joshua Bell, violin, and Horacio Gutiérrez, piano. (Avery Fisher Hall. 874-2424. Through Aug. 26.)

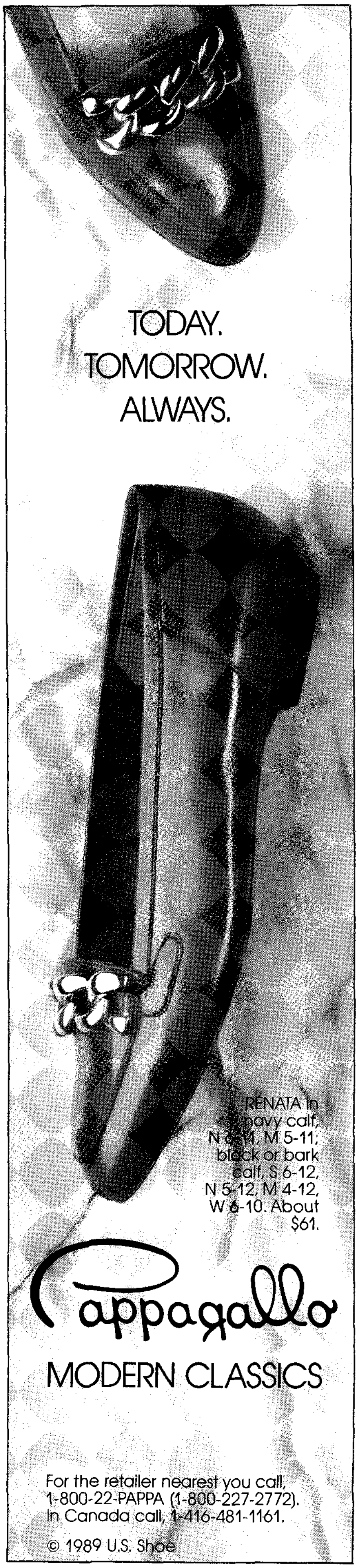
New York Philharmonic—Final performances in this year's series of free outdoor concerts. Yuri Temirkanov conducting Tchaikovsky's violin concerto, with Glenn Dicterow, violin, and the Mussorgsky-Ravel "Pictures at an Exhibition." **CENTRAL PARK'S GREAT LAWN:** Aug. 7. . . . **NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN,** the Bronx: Aug. 8. . . . **CUNNINGHAM PARK,** Queens: Aug. 9. . . . **MARINE PARK,** Brooklyn: Aug. 11. (Evenings at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

Caramoor Music Festival—Aug. 11 at 9: Chamber music, with Ani Kavafian and Carmit Zori, violin; Fred Sherry, cello; David Shifrin,



Yuri Temirkanov conducts the New York Philharmonic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MUSIC—Cont'd

clarinet; Nancy Allen, harp; and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 8:30: The New York Chamber Soloists, featuring Mark Gould, trumpet. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 5:30: The Tokyo String Quartet, with guest artist Ralph Kirshbaum, cello. (Katonah, N.Y. Through Aug. 20. Trains that leave Grand Central on Saturdays at 2:48 and 5:48, and on Sundays at 3:48, are met at Katonah by buses for Caramoor. For information about tickets and trains, call 1-914 232-5035.)

Tanglewood—Aug. 9 at 8:30: Jorma Hynninen, baritone, and Ralf Gothoni, piano, performing Schubert's "Winterreise." . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 7: Yo-Yo Ma, cello, with members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 9: Roger Norrington conducting the London Classical Players in an all-Beethoven program. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 8:30: Seiji Ozawa conducting the orchestra and vocal soloists in a partially staged presentation of Honegger's "Joan of Arc at the Stake," with Marthe Keller as Joan. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 2:30: Jeffrey Tate conducting the orchestra, with Mr. Ma, cello. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 8:30: Alicia de Larrocha, piano, performing Albéniz's "Iberia." (Lenox, Mass. Through Aug. 27. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

Saratoga Performing Arts Center—A three-week engagement of the **Philadelphia Orchestra**, which runs through Aug. 26. Aug. 9: James De Preist conducting a Persichetti-Rachmaninoff-Beethoven program, with Phillippe Entremont, piano. . . . ¶ Aug. 10: Hugh Wolff conducting works by Barber, Bruch, and Tchaikovsky. With Midori, violin. . . . ¶ Aug. 12: Hugh Wolff conducting, with Itzhak Perlman, violin. . . . ¶ Aug. 16: Yuri *Temirkanov conducting an all-Tchaikovsky* program, with Alexander Toradze, piano. (Saratoga Springs, N.Y. 1-518 587-3330. Evenings at 8:15.)

JAZZ / ROCK / POP PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Joe Jackson—This graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, has been, successively, the very model of a skinny-tie New Wave rocker, a big-band jazz leader, a film-score composer, and, most recently, a would-be Sondheim for disillusioned baby boomers; his new album, "Blaze of Glory," is "dedicated to my generation," and sounds like a thickly orchestrated original-cast recording of "Into the Woods of Early Middle Age." (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 8-10 at 8.)

Bee Gees—Not a garish porcelain statue by Jeff Koons but three living, breathing musicians, the onetime Australian Beatles, the unwitting infusers of charisma into white suits and gold chains, the creators of six No. 1 songs between 1975 and 1979, the apotheosis of all that was unaccountably characteristic of the seventies. Both believers and premature decade-trend followers will be gathering to see how the quavering sincerity and brave falsettos of the Bee Gees are faring these days. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 757-3100. Aug. 9-10 at 8.)

K. D. Lang and the Reclines—She began life as Kathy Dawn Lang of Consort, Alberta, but this prairie flower has grown up to be a powerhouse Western swing and torch singer as well as a pointedly boyish-looking woman who ignores country music's rigid gender-determined image requirements. She is also the first country star to affect lowercase initials, like e. e. cummings, but nobody's perfect. The West Texas honky-tonk rocker Joe Ely will open the show with a solo acoustic set. (Beacon Theatre. Aug. 11 at 8.)

B-52's—Everybody's in on the delirious joke at their concerts, and cheap music doesn't come any more potent than this. Touring to promote their brilliant new summer party album, "Cosmic Thing," the band is offering, as always, a dance-groove compound of surf guitars, cheesy organ, lisping male and mincing female vocals, along with their defiantly fey pop songs. (Palladium, 126 E. 14th St. 473-7171. Aug. 11 at 8.)

Menudo—*Ricky has outgrown this permanent*ly adolescent five-boy Puerto Rican bubble-gum-pop act, and his replacement, Rawy, will make his Menudo début and turn thirteen the same night. Serious fans say that Ruben has sprouted past six feet and will be the next to go. Another token of fleeting youth, Tina Yothers (the burgeoning blond little sister on "Family Ties"), will open the concert. The Cover Girls will also perform. (Felt Forum, Madison Square Garden. 563-8300. Aug. 11 at 6 and 9:30.)

David Sanborn Band—With Brenda Russell. (Radio City Music Hall. Aug. 16 at 8.)

"Classical Jazz"—Final performances in the series. Aug. 7: The music of Jelly Roll Morton, with Wynton Marsalis, Walter Payton, Steve Pastorius, and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 8: A birthday celebration for Benny Carter, with Mr. Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Hank Jones, Ray Brown, Ernestine Anderson, and others. . . . ¶ Aug. 9-10: A salute to Duke Ellington, with Mr. Marsalis and the Classical Jazz Orchestra. (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911. Evenings at 8.)

Beacon Theatre—Other concerts this week: Natalie Cole, Aug. 14. . . . ¶ Living Colour, in benefit performances, Aug. 15-16. (Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Evenings at 8.)

Menudo at the Felt Forum

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Cleveland Indians, Aug. 7-9 at 7:30.

Mets—Vs. the St. Louis Cardinals, Aug. 10 at 5:05 (a twi-night doubleheader), Aug. 11 at 7:35, Aug. 12 at 7:05, and Aug. 13 at 1:35. . . . ¶ Vs. the San Diego Padres, Aug. 15-16 at 7:35 and Aug. 17 at 1:35. (Home base for the Mets is Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; and for the Yankees, Yankee Stadium, 293-6000.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1:30. The Ballerina is on Aug. 11, the Alabama is on Aug. 12, and the Bernard Baruch Handicap is on Aug. 13. Through Aug. 28. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Weekdays at 1:30. . . . **Trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: Weeknights at 7:30: Through Aug. 19. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Mondays through Saturdays at 7:45.

The All-American Juggle-In at Lincoln Center

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Night Skies—Many small children want to be astronomers when they grow up. We abandoned the idea in our preteens, but we still look up at the stars with a sense of missed opportunity. This is the week to recoup our losses. As the moon sets on August 12 (around 2 A.M.), we'll be able to view the Perseid meteor showers, a yearly light show caused by the collision of the earth, on its way around the sun, with dust in the orbit of the *comet Swift-Tuttle. Sky-watchers, especially* if they're far from the city's lights, should be able to count about forty shooting stars an hour, all coming from the direction of the constellation Perseus. (The best year on record was 1920, when astronomers counted some two hundred meteors an hour.) At 9:20 on the sixteenth, four nights later, the full moon will begin to turn a hazy orange-brown as it moves into the earth's shadow. The eclipse will be over by 12:56. We might not sleep much this week, but we'll have satisfied a childhood dream.

Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors—A monthlong extravaganza that runs through Aug. 27. Aug. 8 at 5:15: Johanna Boyce & Calfwomen and Jennifer Monson & Dancers. . . . At 8:15: *The Elisa Monte Dance Company*. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 5:15: The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre in "The Chinese Charade," a musical comedy. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 5:15: Santiago Jimenez, Jr. . . . At 8:15: "Angels: Visions and Apparitions," a music-theatre work by David Borden, with the Mother Mallard Ensemble. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 5:15: Luckine Jazz Dance Company of Cannes. . . . At 8:15: "Angels: Visions and Apparitions." . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 1: The first annual all-American Juggle-In. . . . At 4: The High Street Circus. . . . At 8:15: Mimic Sole with Jim Jackson. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 1: The Juggle-In. . . . Also at 1: The making of a forty-foot goddess from fruit and vegetables. . . . At 8:15: Tom Paxton, Christine Lavin, Carrie Smith, the Persuasions, and Michael Alpert. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 5:15: Creach/Koester and David Zambrano. . . . At 7: The Goldman Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 5:15: "The Angle of Ascent," a performance work presented by Creative Time. . . . At 8:15: The Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. (Lincoln Center. No tickets necessary.)

Jones Beach Theatre—Aug. 10: Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, and Howe. . . . ¶ Aug. 11: The Bangles. . . . ¶ Aug. 12-13: Ringo Starr & Friends. . . . ¶ Aug. 15: Gipsy Kings. . . . ¶ Aug. 16: Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, and the Replacements. (Evenings at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-516 221-1000.)

Prospect Park Band Shell—Aug. 11 at 8: Il Piccolo Teatro del'Opera and the Brooklyn Philharmonic in a concert performance of "Tosca." Anton Coppola conducting. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 8: Noel Pointer with the Great Day Chorale. (For rain-date information, call 1-718 768-0699.)

Central Park Band Shell—Aug. 11 at 8:30: Ralph Lee and the Mettawee River Company. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 3: E.U. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 3: Flaco Jimenez. (Mid-Park at 72nd St. No tickets necessary. For rain-date information, call 860-1335.)

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 18.

EAST SIDE

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Through Aug. 13: Documentary and short films shown as part of Festival Latino in New York. In Spanish or Portuguese, some with English subtitles.
From Aug. 14: Theatre temporarily closed.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 8: "Shag" (directed by Zelda Barron), with Phoebe Cates, Scott Coffey, Annabeth Gish, Bridget Fonda, Page Hannah, and Robert Rusler. From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.
Theatre 3: "Young Einstein" (Yahoo Serious), with Serious.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
"Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, and Craig T. Nelson.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
Through Aug. 8: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.

Murray Hill, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
"Batman" (†).

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (†).
Theatre 2: "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (†).
Theatre 3: "Licence to Kill" (John Glen), with Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, and Anthony Zerbe.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Parenthood" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
"Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (†).

Sutton, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
"Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Aug. 8: "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (†).
From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Ghostbusters II" (†).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan" (Rob Hedden).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Do the Right Thing" (†).

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Parenthood" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, and Craig T. Nelson.
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 12: "Turner & Hooch." From Aug. 13: "Distant Voices, Still Lives" (Terence Davies), with Freda Dowie and Peter Postlethwaite.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Young Einstein" (Yahoo Serious), with Serious.
Theatre 2: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone, Donald Sutherland, John Amos, Darlanne Fluegel, and Sonny Landham.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 15: "UHF" (Jay Levey), with "Weird Al" Yankovic. From Aug. 16: "Rude Awakening" (Aaron Russo and David Greenwalt), with Cheech Marin, Eric Roberts, Julie Hagerty, and Robert Carradine.
Theatre 2: "Licence to Kill" (John Glen), with Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, and Anthony Zerbe.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
"Dead Poets Society" (†).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"Peter Pan" (1953), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
"Parenthood" (†).

Loews Orpheum I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (289-4607)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Licence to Kill" (John Glen), with Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, and Anthony Zerbe. From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: "Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, and Craig T. Nelson.
Theatre 2: "Batman" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum I, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)
Through Aug. 8: "The Magic Toyshop" (directed by David Wheatley), with Tom Bell, Caroline Milmoe, Kilian McKenna, Patricia Kerrigan, and Lorcan Granitch.
From Aug. 9: "Machine Dreams" (Peter Krieg; in English and German).

Bleecker Street Cinema I and 2, 144 Bleecker St. (674-2560)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Chinese Roulette" (1977, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Margit Carstensen; and "Why Does Herr R. Run Amok?" (1970, Fassbinder; in German), with Kurt Raab, Lilith Ungerer, and Hanna Schygulla. . . . ¶ Aug. 9-10: "The Stationmaster's Wife" (1977, Fassbinder; in German), with Raab. . . . ¶ Aug. 11-13: "The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant" (1972, Fassbinder; in German). . . . ¶ Aug. 14-15: "The American Soldier" (1970, Fassbinder; in German), with Karl Scheydt and Margarethe von Trotta; and "Katzelmacher" (1969, Fassbinder; in German), with Schygulla, Harry Baer, and Fassbinder. . . . ¶ From Aug. 16: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974, Fassbinder; in German), with Brigitte Mira.
Theatre 2: "Chocolat" (†).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 2: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan" (Rob Hedden).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
"Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Les Liaisons Dangereuses" (†).
Theatre 2: "Peter Pan" (1953), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon.
Theatre 3: "The Navigator: An Odyssey Across Time" (Vincent Ward), with Bruce Lyons.
Theatre 4: "Dead Poets Society" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 8: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†). From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.
Theatre 4: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 8: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†). From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.
Theatre 6: "Young Einstein" (Yahoo Serious), with Serious.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Do the Right Thing" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone and Donald Sutherland.
Theatre 3: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan" (Rob Hedden).

Worldwide Cinemas, 49th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).
Theatre 3: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 4: "When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).
Theatre 5: "Parenthood" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Dead Poets Society" (†).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
Through Aug. 8: "The Karate Kid Part III" (John G. Avildsen), with Ralph Macchio and Noriyuki (Pat) Morita.
From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio and Michael Biehn.

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"The Navigator: An Odyssey Across Time" (Vincent Ward), with Bruce Lyons.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Young Einstein" (Yahoo Serious), with Serious.

Carnegie Hall Cinema, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
"Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills" (†).

Carnegie Screening Room, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (757-2131)
"Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (†).

Paris, 4 W. 58th. (688-2013)
"Eat a Bowl of Tea" (Wayne Wang).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Field of Dreams" (†).

Loews Paramount, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Dead Poets Society" (†).

Lincoln Plaza I, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle" (†).
Theatre 2: "A Taxing Woman Returns" (Juzo Itami; in Japanese), with Nobuko Miyamoto.
Theatre 3: "The Music Teacher" (Gérard Corbiau; in French).

Cinema Studio I and 2, B'way at 66th. (877-4040)
Theatre 1: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).
Theatre 2: "sex, lies, and videotape" (†).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"When Harry Met Sally . . ." (†).

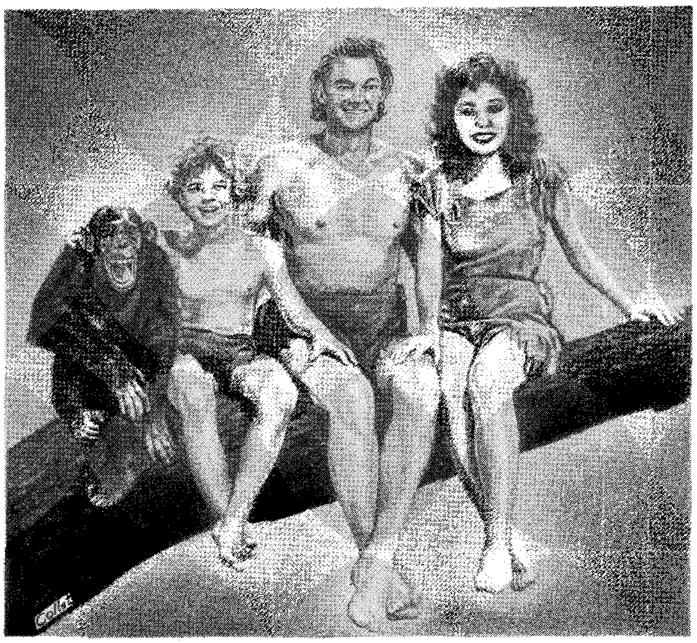
Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone and Donald Sutherland.
Theatre 3: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan" (Rob Hedden).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 15: "Licence to Kill" (John Glen), with Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, and Anthony Zerbe. From Aug. 16: "Rude Awakening" (Aaron Russo and David Greenwalt), with Cheech Marin, Eric Roberts, Julie Hagerty, and Robert Carradine.
Theatre 5: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).
Theatre 6: "Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, and Craig T. Nelson.

Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 8: "Ghostbusters II" (†). From Aug. 9: "The Abyss" (James Cameron), with Ed Harris, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Michael Biehn.
Theatre 2: "Young Einstein" (Yahoo Serious), with Serious.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Batman" (†).
Theatre 2: "Young Einstein" (directed by Yahoo Serious), with Serious.
Theatre 3: "Shag" (Zelda Barron), with Phoebe Cates, Scott Coffey, Annabeth Gish, Bridget Fonda, Page Hannah, and Robert Rusler.
Theatre 4: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan" (Rob Hedden).
Theatre 5: "Friday the 13th, Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan."
Theatre 6: "Lock Up" (John Flynn), with Sylvester Stallone and Donald Sutherland.



At MOMA, "Tarzan Finds a Son"

EMBASSY 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Turner & Hooch" (Roger Spottiswoode), with Tom Hanks, Mare Winningham, and Craig T. Nelson.

EMBASSY 2, 3, AND 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 2: "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" (†).
Theatre 3: "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids" (†).
Theatre 4: "Peter Pan" (1953), a full-length Walt Disney cartoon.

LOEWS ASTOR PLAZA, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Licence to Kill" (John Glen), with Timothy Dalton, Carey Lowell, Robert Davi, Talisa Soto, and Anthony Zerbe.

NATIONAL TWIN, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Parenthood" (†).
Theatre 2: "Do the Right Thing" (†).

WARNER, 7th Ave. between 42nd and 43rd. (764-6760)
"Ghostbusters II" (†).

WEST SIDE CINEMA 1 AND 2, 7th Ave. at 48th. (398-1720)
Theatre 1: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).
Theatre 2: "Lethal Weapon 2" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

BIOGRAPH CINEMA, 225 W. 57th. (582-4582)
Feature films shown as part of Festival Latino in New York. In Spanish or Portuguese with English subtitles.

CINEMA VILLAGE, 22 E. 12th. (924-3363)
Through Aug. 8: Two programs of cartoons shown each day.
Aug. 9-10: "The Arabian Nights" (1973, directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian); and "The Decameron" (1971, Pasolini; in Italian), with Franco Citti, Ninetto Davoli, and Pasolini.
Aug. 11-12: "Fellini Satyricon" (†); and "Fellini's Roma" (1972, Federico Fellini; in English and Italian).
Aug. 13: "Gone with the Wind" (1939, Victor Fleming), with Vivien Leigh, Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland, Leslie Howard, Thomas Mitchell, Hattie McDaniel, and Butterfly McQueen.
Aug. 14-15: "Moonstruck" (1987, Norman Jewison), with Cher, Nicolas Cage, Olympia Dukakis, Julie Bovasso, Vincent Gardenia, Danny Aiello, John Mahoney, and Anita Gillette; and "The Mad Adventures of 'Rabbi' Jacob" (1973, Gérard Oury; in French), with Louis de Funès.
From Aug. 16: "Annie Hall" (1977, Woody Allen), with Allen and Diane Keaton; and "New York Stories" (1989; Allen, Francis Coppola, and Martin Scorsese), with Nick Nolte, Allen, Mia Farrow, Mae Questel, and Julie Kavner.

FILM FORUM 2, 57 Watts St. (431-1590)
Aug. 7: "The Tingler" (1960, William Castle), with Vincent Price; and "House of Wax" (1953, André de Toth; in 3-D), with Phyllis Kirk, Vincent Price, Carolyn Jones, and Paul Picerni.
Aug. 8-10: "The Tingler"; and "The Fly" (1958, Kurt Newmann), with David Hedison, Patricia Owens, and Vincent Price.
Aug. 11-12: "Invaders from Mars" (1953, William Cameron Menzies), with Helena Carter and Arthur Franz; and "Rocketship X-M" (1950, Kurt Newmann), with Lloyd Bridges and Osa Massen.
Aug. 13: "Forbidden Planet" (1956, Fred M. Wilcox), with Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis, and Leslie Nielsen; and "It! The Terror from Beyond Space" (1958, Edward L. Cahn).
Aug. 14: "Deluge" (1933, Felix E. Feist); and "Secrets of F.P.1" (1932, Karl Hartl), with Conrad Veidt.
Aug. 15-16: "Dead of Night" (†); and "Dr. Terror's House of Horrors" (1965, Freddie Francis), with Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee.

THALIA SOHO, 15 Vandam St. (675-0498)
Aug. 7: "Anna Christie" (1923, John Griffith Wray; silent), with Blanche Sweet; and "The Grand Duchess and the Waiter" (1926, Mal St. Clair; silent), with Florence Vidor and Adolphe Menjou.
Aug. 8: "Passport to Pimlico" (1949, Henry Cornelius), with Stanley Holloway and Margaret Rutherford; and "Hue and Cry" (1947, Charles Crichton), with Alastair Sim, Jack Warner, and Valerie White.
Aug. 9: "The Hidden Room" (1950, Edward Dmytryk), with Robert Newton and Sally Grey; and "Guest in the House" (1945, John Brahm), with Anne Baxter and Ralph Bellamy.
Aug. 10: "Veronika Voss" (1982, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Rosel Zech; and "Nosferatu, the Vampyre" (1979, Werner Herzog; in German), with Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, and Bruno Ganz.
Aug. 11-12: "A Cry in the Dark" (1988, Fred Schepisi), with Meryl Streep and Sam Neill; and "The Accused" (1988, Jonathan Kaplan), with Kelly McGillis and Jodie Foster.
Aug. 13: "Padre Padrone" (†); and "Under the Sun of Rome" (1948, Renato Castellani; in Italian), with Oscar Blando.
Aug. 14: "Shifting Sands" (1918, Albert Parker; silent), with Gloria Swanson; and "Sold for Marriage" (1916, Christy Cabanne; silent), with Lillian Gish.
Aug. 15: "The Dybbuk" (1938, Michael Waszynsky); and two short films.
Aug. 16: "Charade" (1963, Stanley Donen), with Cary Grant, Audrey Hepburn, Walter Matthau, James Coburn, George Kennedy, Ned Glass, and Jacques Marin; and "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (†).

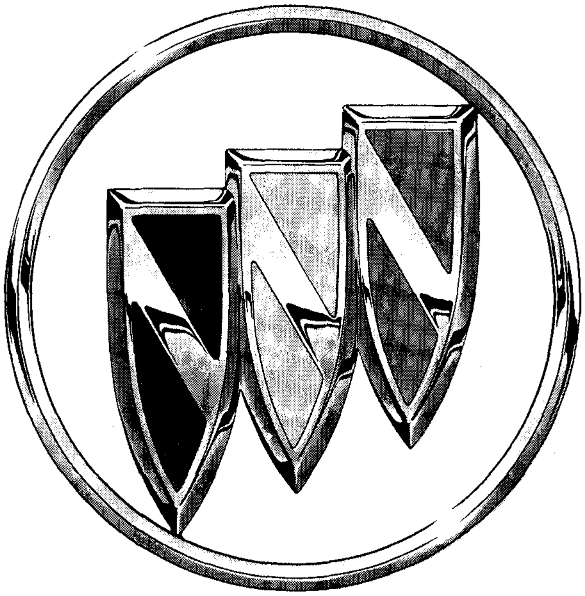
THEATRE 80 ST. MARKS, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Aug. 7: "The Tenant" (1976, Roman Polanski), with Polanski, Isabelle Adjani, Melvyn Douglas, Jo Van Fleet, and Shelley Winters; and "Knife in the Water" (1962, Polanski; in Polish), with Zygmunt Malanoquicz, Leon Niemczyk, and Jolanta Umecka.
Aug. 8: "Arsène Lupin" (1932, Jack Conway), with John and Lionel Barrymore; and "The Man Who Wouldn't Die" (1942, Herbert I. Leeds), with Marjorie Weaver and Lloyd Nolan.
Aug. 9: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese), with Robert De Niro, Harvey Keitel, and Amy Robinson; and "Bang the Drum Slowly" (1973, John Hancock), with Michael Moriarty and De Niro.
Aug. 10: "Persona" (1967, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Bibi Andersson and Liv Ullmann; and "The Seventh Seal" (1956, Bergman; in Swedish), with Max von Sydow, Gunnar Björnstrand, Andersson, and Nils Poppe.
Aug. 11-12: "The Long, Hot Summer" (1958, Martin Ritt), with Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, and Anthony Franciosa; and "A Streetcar Named Desire" (†).
Aug. 13: "To Catch a Thief" (1955, Alfred Hitchcock), with Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Jessie Royce Landis, Charles Vanel, and Brigitte Auber; and "Wait Until Dark" (1967, Terence Young), with Audrey Hepburn, Alan Arkin, and Richard Crenna.
Aug. 14: "Les Biches" (1968, Claude Chabrol; in French), with Jacqueline Sassard, Jean-Louis Trintignant, and Stéphane Audran; and "My Life to Live" (1962, Jean-Luc Godard; in French), with Anna Karina.
Aug. 15: "Charlie Chan at the Wax Museum" (1940, Lynn Shores), with Sidney Toler as Chan; and "Charlie Chan's Secret" (1936, Gordon Wiles), with Warner Oland as Chan.
Aug. 16: "I Could Go On Singing" (†); and "The Star" (1963, Stuart Heisler), with Bette Davis and Sterling Hayden.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—Hollywood films made in 1939. Aug. 7 at 2:30: "The Roaring Twenties" (directed by Raoul Walsh), with James Cagney, Priscilla Lane, and Humphrey Bogart. . . . ¶ Aug. 7 at 6: "Love Affair" (Leo McCarey), with Irene Dunne, Charles Boyer, and Maria Ouspenskaya. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 2:30: "Maisie" (Edwin L. Marin), with Ann Sothern, Robert Young, and Ruth Hussey. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 6: "Calling Dr. Kildare" (Harold S. Bucquet), with Lew Ayres, Lionel Barrymore, and Lana Turner. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 2:30: "Tarzan Finds a Son" (Richard Thorpe), with Johnny Weissmuller, Maureen O'Sullivan, and Johnny Sheffield. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 6: "Maisie." . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 2:30: "Calling Dr. Kildare." . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 6: "Babes in Arms" (Busby Berkeley), with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 2: "Tarzan Finds a Son." . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 5: "Son of Frankenstein" (Rowland V. Lee), with Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff, and Bela Lugosi. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 2: "Babes in Arms." . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 5: "First Love" (Henry Koster), with Deanna Durbin, Robert Stack, and Leatrice Joy. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 2:30: "Son of Frankenstein." . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6: "Tower of London" (Lee), with Rathbone, Karloff, and Vincent Price. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 2:30: "First Love." . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6: "Four Wives" (Michael Curtiz), with Claude Rains, John Garfield, and the Lane Sisters.

FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER—New Wave French films. Aug. 11 at 6:15: "Pierrot le Fou" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Anna Karina. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 8:30: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut), with Jean-Pierre Léaud. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 2:30: "Bob le Flambeur" (1956, Jean-Pierre Melville). . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 5: "Elevator to the Gallows" (1958, Louis Malle), with Jeanne Moreau. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 7: "Les Cousins" (1959, Claude Chabrol), with Gérard Blain and Jean-Claude Brialy. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 9:30: "Breathless" (1960, Godard), with Belmondo and Jean Seberg. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 2:30: "La Tête Contre les Murs" (1958, Georges Franju), with Jean-Pierre Mocky, Anouk Aimée, and Charles Aznavour. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 5: "The Testament of Orpheus" (1959, Jean Cocteau), with Jean Marais and Pablo Picasso. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 7: "Shoot the Piano Player" (1962, Truffaut), with Aznavour. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 9: "Hiroshima, Mon Amour" (1959, Alain Resnais), with Emmanuèle Riva and Eiji Okada. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 6:15: "Zazie dans la Métro" (1960, Malle). . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 8:30: "Le Petit Soldat" (1960, Godard). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6:15: "Cleo from 5 to 7" (1961, Agnès Varda). . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 8:30: "Last Year at Marienbad" (1961, Resnais). . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 6:15: "Chronicle of a Summer" (1961, Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin). . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 8:30: "A Woman Is a Woman" (1961, Godard), Karina, Brialy, and Belmondo. (Alice Tully Hall. 362-1911.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE, 36th St. at 35th Ave., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—Films directed by Cecil B. De Mille. Aug. 9 at 2:30: "Unconquered" (1947), with Gary Cooper and Paulette Goddard. . . . Aug. 10 at 2:30: "The Greatest Show on Earth" (1949), with Charlton Heston, Betty Hutton, James Stewart, and Gloria Grahame. . . . Aug. 11 at 2:30: "The Ten Commandments" (1956), with Heston and Yul Brynner. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 1: "Showgirl in Hollywood" (1930,



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MOVIE HOUSES—*Cont'd*

Mervyn LeRoy), with Alice White, Jack Mulhall, and Blanche Sweet. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 3: "What's the Matter with Helen?" (1971, Curtis Harrington), with Shelley Winters and Debbie Reynolds. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 5: "Peeping Tom" (1959, Michael Powell), with Carl Boehm and Moira Shearer. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 1: "What's the Matter with Helen?" . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 3: "Peeping Tom," with a talk by Michael Powell. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 5: "In a Lonely Place" (1950, Nicholas Ray), with Humphrey Bogart and Gloria Grahame. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 2:30: "Peeping Tom."

Museum of Broadcasting, 1 E. 53rd St. (752-7684)—"MB Playhouse," a chance to see the television dramas you may have missed in the past thirty years. Aug. 8-12: Thomas Wolfe's "Look Homeward, Angel" (1972, CBS), with Geraldine Page, E. G. Marshall, Barnard Hughes, and Kathryn Walker. . . . From Aug. 15: Joseph P. Lash's "Eleanor and Franklin, Part 2" (1976, ABC), with Jane Alexander and Edward Herrmann. Showings Tuesdays at 3 and 6 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 3. . . . ¶ Comedies seen on cable. Aug. 8-12: "SCTV" (1984), with Joe Flaherty, Eugene Levy, Martin Short, Andrea Martin, and John Candy. . . . From Aug. 15: "The Last Polka" (1986), with John Candy and Eugene Levy. Showings Tuesdays at 12:15 and 5:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 12:15. . . . ¶ "Cinderella" (1957, Ralph Nelson; CBS), with Julie Andrews, Howard Lindsay, Dorothy Stickney, Ilka Chase, Edie Adams, Alice Ghostley, and Kaye Ballard. Music by Richard Rodgers, lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II. Showings Tuesdays at 2:30 and 6:30 and Wednesdays through Saturdays at 2:30. . . . ¶ Shows produced and directed by Gary Smith and Dwight Hemion. Aug. 8-12: "Steve and Eydie Celebrate Irving Berlin" (1978, NBC), with Carol Burnett, Sammy Davis, Jr., and Oscar Peterson; and "The Kopycats" (1972, ABC). . . . From Aug. 15: "Bette Midler—Ol' Red Hair Is Back" (1977, NBC), with the Harlettes and Dustin Hoffman; and "Ben Vereen . . . His Roots" (1978, ABC), with Cheryl Ladd, Debbie Allen, and Louis Gossett, Jr. Showings Tuesdays through Saturdays at 1.

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. (662-2133)—Aug. 10 at 8: "Orphans of the Storm" (1921, D. W. Griffith; silent), with Lillian and Dorothy Gish. Organ accompaniment written and played by Lee Erwin.

Uris Center Auditorium, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 81st St. (879-5500)—Aug. 8 at 6:30: "Lights and Shadows" (1988, Jaime Camino; in Spanish and Catalán), with José Luis Gómez. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 2: "Half of Heaven" (1986, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón; in Spanish), with Angela Molina. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 6:30: "Tasio" (1984, Montxo Armendáriz; in Spanish and Basque).

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, eighth floor, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Aug. 8 at 1, 4:25, and 7:50: "The River Niger" (1972, Irving Leming), with James Earl Jones, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Cicely Tyson. . . . ¶ Aug. 8 at 2:45 and 6:10: "Sitting in Limbo" (John Smith), with Pat Dillon, Fabian Gibbs, Sylvie Clarke, and Debbie Grant. . . . ¶ Aug. 9 at 2, 4:30, and 7: "Porgy and Bess" (1959, Otto Preminger), with Sidney Poitier, Dorothy Dandridge, Sammy Davis, Jr., Pearl Bailey, and Brock Peters. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 1, 4, and 7:05: "Brother from Another Planet" (1984, John Sayles), with Joe Morton. . . . ¶ Aug. 10 at 2:50, 6, and 8:55: "Son of Ingagi" (1941), with Spencer Williams. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 1, 4:10, and 7:10: "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (1973, Ivan Dixon), with Lawrence Cook and Paula Kelly. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 2:40 and 5:45: "Putney Swope" (1969, Robert Downey), with Arnold Johnson and Antonio Fargas. . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 9: "Sweet Sweetback's Baadasss Song" (1971, Melvin Van Peebles). . . . ¶ Aug. 11 at 10:30: "The Mack" (1973, Michael Campus), with Max Julien and Richard Pryor. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 1, 3:25, and 6: "Joe's Bed-Stuy Barbershop: We Cut Heads" (1983, Spike Lee), with Monty Ross. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 2, 4:30, and 7: "Hollywood Shuffle" (1987, Robert Townsend), with Townsend and Kenen Ivory Wayans. . . . ¶ Aug. 12 at 9: "Bob Marley: The Legend" (1984); and "The Legends of Reggae Music," a montage film. . . . ¶ Aug. 13 at 2, 4:30, and 7: "Porgy and Bess." . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 1, 3:30, and 6:05: "Native Son" (1951, Pierre Chenal), with Richard Wright. . . . ¶ Aug. 14 at 2:35, 5:10, and 7:40: "Almos' a Man" (1976), with LeVar Burton and Madge Sinclair. . . . ¶ Aug. 15 at 2, 4, 6, and 8: Four 1951 episodes of the "Amos 'n' Andy" show. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 1, 4:10, and 7:20: "Stormy Weather" (1943, Andrew Stone), with Lena Horne, Bill Robinson, Cab Calloway, and Fats Waller. . . . ¶ Aug. 16 at 2:20 and 5:30: "Cabin in the Sky" (1943, Vincente Minnelli), with Ethel Waters, Eddie Anderson, and Lena Horne.

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Terrence Rafferty.)

Batman—Tim Burton's powerfully glamorous comic-book epic, with sets angled and lighted like film noir, goes beyond pulp. It has a funky, nihilistic charge, and an eerie, poetic intensity. Michael Keaton is the fabulously wealthy Bruce Wayne, who patrols the sinister nighttime canyons of Gotham City in the guise of Batman, and Jack Nicholson is the sniggering mobster Jack Napier, who turns into the leering madman the Joker. The two are fighting for the soul of the city that spawned them. The movie is underwritten, but it has so many unpredictable spins that what's missing doesn't seem to matter much. It's mean and anarchic and blissful. Written by Sam Hamm, Warren Skaaren (and uncredited others), based on characters created by Bob Kane. With cinematography by Roger Pratt; design by Anton Furst; costumes by Bob Ringwood; a plangent score by Danny Elfman; and songs by Prince. The cast includes Jack Palance, Kim Basinger, Jerry Hall, and Robert Wuhl.—P.K. (Reviewed in our issue of 7/10/89.) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Murray Hill, Cinema I, 86th Street East Twin, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961)—Audrey Hepburn's Holly Golightly is a tad refined for a girl who lives so improvisationally (on the money men give her), but for about the first three quarters of an hour this picture, directed by Blake Edwards, has a fair amount of sophisticated slapstick comedy, especially at a cocktail party that ranks with the best screen parties of the era. If you've read the Truman Capote novella that the movie is based on (and even if you haven't), you may be dismayed to see things go soft and romantic. The film wanders, and Hepburn is forced to become too frail and too enchantingly raffish before it comes to its makeshift, fairy-tale end. The madcap Holly, with her attachment to a writer (George Peppard) whose apartment is just below hers, is, of course, very similar to Sally Bowles with her Isherwood, except that the setting here is New York, not Berlin. Patricia Neal is amusing in the rather impenetrable role of an interior decorator who appears to be a lesbian but is also keeping Peppard. (It may be wise not to let the mind linger too long over that.) Mickey Rooney does a wild bit of racial caricature as the Japanese photographer who lives in the apartment above Holly's; it's the most lowdown and daring thing in the movie. The script is by George Axelrod. Hepburn's clothes are by Givenchy and Neal's are by Pauline Trigere.—P.K. (Thalia SoHo; Aug. 16.)

Chocolat—Whatever Claire Denis's first feature is supposed to be about, it proves, at least, that the English don't have a monopoly on swanky colonial torpor. The movie is constructed as an extended flashback: a young Frenchwoman (named France) travelling in Africa remembers her fifties girlhood in a remote outpost of Cameroon, where her father was a district officer. Most of this story consists of smoldering looks exchanged by the girl's beautiful mother (Giulia Boschi) and the family's handsome African "boy," Protée (Isaach de Bankolé). When Maman feels herself becoming too hot and bothered at the sight of the noble black man, she brusquely orders him to fetch something; Protée deals with his frustration by taking a lot of showers. Nothing actually happens. In denying him any kind of release for his pent-up desire, Denis encourages us to think she's making a political point. What she's really doing is dehumanizing him—treating him as a gleaming hunk whose anger and wounded reserve just make him more exotically alluring. "Chocolat" looks pretty good, but it's merde in a fancy wrapper. In French.—T.R. (Bleecker Street Cinema.)

Dead of Night (1945)—Michael Redgrave plays a schizophrenic ventriloquist tormented by his dummy, and his overpowering performance—a small work of art—lifts this five-part English production above the elegant, sophisticated entertainment it aspired to be. The individual stories are meant to accumulate in intensity, until the trap closes in the surreal climax—an encompassing ghost story. The film begins with Mervyn Johns' arrival at a country house and proceeds through the five episodes: Antony Baird and Miles Malleson in "room for one more"; Sally Ann Howes in the murdered-child sequence (good material poorly done); Googie Withers and Ralph Michael in the story of the mirror that reflects the crime of an earlier century; Basil Radford and Naunton Wayne in the golfers' story told by Roland Culver (which is pretty awful); Michael Redgrave as the ventriloquist, with Hartley Power as his rival and Frederick Valk as the psychoanalyst; then the nightmarish summation. John Baines and Angus MacPhail did the screenplay, using stories by H. G. Wells, E. F. Benson, and themselves; the master writer of English film comedy, T. E. B. Clarke, did the additional dialogue. Directed by Robert Hamer (the mirror story), Basil Dearden,

Laura San Giacomo and Andie MacDowell in "sex, lies, and videotape"

Charles Crichton, and Alberto Cavalcanti (the ventriloquist sequence).—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 15-16.)

Dead Poets Society—Robin Williams gives an astonishingly empathic performance as an eager, dedicated prep-school teacher in the late fifties. This teacher talks to his boys about the passions expressed in poetry and helps them release their creative impulses. But one of the boys, soaring on his new confidence, lacks the shrewdness and courage to deal with his rigid, uncomprehending father, and makes a disastrous choice. Directed by Peter Weir, from a script by Thomas Schulman, the picture draws out the obvious and turns itself into a classic. Weir, it appears, is more interested in the elegiac than in the dramatic. Like his "Gallipoli," this film has a gold ribbon attached to it. With Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles, Gale Hansen, and Kurtwood Smith and Norman Lloyd.—P.K. (6/26/89) (68th St. Playhouse, Quad Cinema, Guild, and Loews Paramount.)

Do the Right Thing—The third feature by Spike Lee takes place in the black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, on a punishingly hot day; the focus of the action is a pizzeria, Sal's Famous, which is apparently the last white-owned business on the block; and the climax is a riot sparked by a monstrous act of police brutality. At its most basic, Lee's intention is to demonstrate how in a racially polarized society the slow accumulation of small irritations can swell to something huge and ugly and lethal. It's a solid idea for a movie, and initially the picture provides its share of incidental pleasures. And, although most of the many characters Lee shows us are types, at least there are a lot of different ones, and their encounters are often funny. But Lee goes wrong by pushing his material to a "powerful" climax, a Scorsese-like explosion of violence: he sacrifices political clarity for the sake of the big statement. He's nimble-witted and passionate, but his movie seems to shout at us rather than speak to us. In addition to writing, producing, and directing, Lee plays the pivotal role of Mookie, the pizza deliveryman. Others in the cast are Danny Aiello (as Sal), Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Giancarlo Esposito, Bill Nunn, Rosie Perez, Joie Lee, John Turturro, and Richard Edson; as a trio of middle-aged street-corner philosophers, Paul Benjamin, Frankie Faison, and Robin Harris are responsible for the movie's best, loosest scenes.—T.R. (7/24/89) (Manhattan Twin, 59th Street East Cinema, Art Greenwich Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Worldwide Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Fellini Satyricon (1970)—Fellini's big pagan ball, with the debauchery of the pre-Christian Roman world at the time of Nero as an analogue of the modern post-Christian period. In "La Dolce Vita," he used the orgies of modern Rome as a parallel to ancient Rome, and now he reverses the analogy to make the same point—that man without a belief in God is a lecherous beast. The film is full of cautionary images of depravity that seem to come out of the imagination of a Catholic schoolboy: an unconscionable number of performers stick out their evil tongues at us, and there are leering cripples, fat freaks with hideous grins, and so on. Fellini draws upon his master-entertainer's feelings for the daydreams of the audience, and many people find this film eerie, spellbinding, and even profound. Essentially, though, it's just a hip version of De Mille's "The Sign of the Cross," and it's less entertaining than De Mille's kitsch—maybe because no one is given a role to play; Fellini is the only star. He uses Petronius and other classic sources as the basis for a movie that is one long orgy of eating, drinking, cruelty, and copulation. There's a charming episode with a beautiful slave girl (Hylette Adolphe) in a deserted house, and some of Danilo Donati's set designs have a hypnotic quality. Written by Fellini and Bernardino Zapponi. In Italian. —P.K. (Cinema Village; Aug. 11-12.)

In his turbulent French Revolution epic "Orphans of the Storm" (1921)—playing August 10 at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine—D. W. Griffith fuses spectacle, action, and romance with swiftness and intensity. In his own melodramatic terms, he blows the dust off the eighteenth century as surely as Stephen Frears does in "Dangerous Liaisons." Griffith interweaves a tale of two girls, Henriette (the transcendent Lillian Gish) and Louise (the merely touching Dorothy Gish)—raised as sisters in the provinces only to be separated in the chaotic streets of Paris—with the duelling swords and accusations of rebels and aristocrats. The foreground action is ardent, the background volatile; there's nothing middling about it.

One episode comes straight out of Carlyle or Dickens: a marquis's speeding carriage kills a child, but the nobleman is concerned only with the condition of his horses. The same marquis arranges for Henriette to be kidnapped; luckily, she wins the protection of the truly noble Chevalier de Vaudray (Joseph Schildkraut). Meanwhile, Louise, who went to Paris to be cured of her plague-induced blindness, is exploited by a greedy beggarwoman. As Henriette searches for Louise, she crosses paths with Danton ("the Abraham Lincoln of France") and Robespierre ("the original pussyfooter"). Even at its silliest, the movie has an infectious immediacy, as when Robespierre pussyfoots around Henriette's door. And Henriette is a heartbreaker. After seeing her enact sisterly hope, bereavement, and hope again, it's hard not to gush about Gish.

Field of Dreams—Doggerel emotion. Kevin Costner, a New Age farmer in Iowa, longs to be reconciled with his dead father, a minor-league baseball player whose outlook he had rejected in the sixties. He hears a whispered command to build a baseball field, and when he does the spirits of Shoeless Joe Jackson (Ray Liotta) and the other White Sox who were barred from baseball for life after the 1919 World Series scandal arrive and play regularly. This is only the beginning of the hero's mystical encounters. That the film is sincere doesn't mean it's not manipulative; when the weepers in the audience start up, you may feel like a pariah if you're not moved. Adapted by the writer-director Phil Alden Robinson from W. P. Kinsella's 1982 novel "Shoeless Joe." With Amy Madigan, James Earl Jones, Burt Lancaster, Dwier Brown as the father, and Gaby Hoffman.—P.K. (5/1/89) (Cinema 3.)

Four Adventures of Reinette and Mirabelle—Eric Rohmer's latest picture doesn't belong to his "Comedies and Proverbs" cycle, and it isn't the beginning of a new series, either. It's not much of anything, actually—just a quartet of sketches about a country girl (Joëlle Miquel) and a city girl (Jessica Forde). Most of it was shot, in 16 mm., while Rohmer and his crew were waiting to film the "green ray" effect for his 1987 "Summer"; this movie was conceived as a diversion, an agreeable time killer, and it's very, very slight. The first episode, "The Blue Hour," which takes place in the country, is the most satisfying: an elegant little essay on natural sounds and the value of silence. The remaining three—set in Paris, where Reinette and Mirabelle share an apartment—are no more than anecdotes: casual, graceful, and utterly trivial. The movie is almost weightless, yet it has its own brand of airy integrity. Rohmer respects his characters and their sometimes peculiar ideas; every argument is permitted to run its course, and we're free to find it silly or profound. Also with Fabrice Luchini, Philippe Laudenbach, Marie Riviere, and Béatrice Romand. Cinematography by Sophie Maintigneux; sound by Pierre Camus and Pascal Ribier. In French.—T.R. (Lincoln Plaza.)

Ghostbusters II—Surprisingly, it's more enjoyable than the first "Ghostbusters." It's a big comedy, but it's light on its feet, and the

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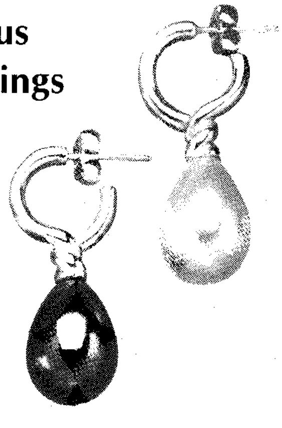

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throwaway jokes are weightless—they *ping!* and dissolve in the air. You can't remember what you're laughing at, but you feel great. The script, by Harold Ramis and Dan Aykroyd, is a floating crap game, like the scripts for the Hope and Crosby "Road" pictures. Bill Murray holds it together, and assorted comedians—Sigourney Weaver, Rick Moranis, Annie Potts, Ernie Hudson, Peter MacNicol, Cheech Marin, Harris Yulin, Ramis & Aykroyd—come in and out of the scenes, dropping one-liners. The comic premise is that the collective angry energy of Manhattanites is feeding an underground river of boiling slime, which is swelling; our bad vibes are literally destroying the city. Directed by Ivan Reitman; cinematography by Michael Chapman.—P.K. (7/10/89) (Plaza, and Warner. . . . ¶ Olympia; through Aug. 8.)

Honey, I Shrunk the Kids—A contraption invented by a suburban nerd scientist (Rick Moranis) cuts both his kids and the neighbors' down to size: a quarter of an inch. Unaware of what has happened, and unable to hear their pipsqueak cries, Dad sweeps them into a dustpan, dumps them in a garbage bag, and hauls the bag out to the curb. The kids have to make their way back to the house across the (not very recently mowed) lawn—a long trek for tiny, tiny legs. There are adventures, of course, engineered by the sort of special-effects "magic" that probably even the youngest audiences have learned by now to dread. The real surprise of this movie—which was directed by Joe Johnston, an effects specialist from Industrial Light & Magic, and which carries an immense list of technical credits (including a "Scorpion Crew," a "Bee Sequence Crew," and a "Stop Motion Ant Crew")—is that it's friendly, good-humored, and unpretentious. Johnston manages to scale down not only the kids but also the movie's sense of its own importance. Also with Matt Frewer, Marcia Strassman, and Kristine Sutherland; Jared Rushton, Amy O'Neill, Thomas Brown, and Robert Oliveri are the kids. The imaginative cinematography is by Hiro Narita—T.R. (Loews 34th Street Showplace, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Gotham Cinema; through Aug. 8.)

I Could Go On Singing (1963)—Dreadful, but often fascinating: Judy Garland in the sort of movie that is usually made about a performer long after the events, and with someone else playing the lead. Her face puffy, her manner distressed, she goes through a sort of "Madame X" version of a selfish singer's life, in which she belts out numbers at the Palladium. Made in England and directed by Ronald Neame. With Dirk Bogarde, Jack Klugman, and Aline MacMahon.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 16.)

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade—This mediocre third film in the Indiana Jones trilogy—a reprise of the first, "Raiders of the Lost Ark"—is a mixture of cliffhanger and anti-Nazi thriller and religious spectacle. It's enjoyable, but familiar, and the action lacks the exhilarating, leaping precision that the director, Steven Spielberg, is famous for. The only real spin is in the slapstick teamwork of Harrison Ford, as the archeologist-adventurer Indy, and Sean Connery, as Indy's father, a medievalist who's too engrossed in his studies to pay much attention to his daredevil son's triumphs. With River Phoenix playing Indy as a boy, Alison Doody, Denholm Elliott, John Rhys-Davies, and Julian Glover. The screenplay, by Jeffrey Boam, is based on a story devised by the producer George Lucas and Menno Meyjes.—P.K. (6/12/89) (Loews 34th Street Showplace, Eastside Cinema, and Embassy.)

Lethal Weapon 2—Chases, explosions, fights, barrages of insults, the odd moment of manly sentimentality—these are the standard elements of American action movies in the eighties, and the "Lethal Weapon" movies use them with an amazing lack of shame. There's lots of comedy, but no real relief: the punch lines slam into our brains like cars into plate-glass windows. The only thing that makes this movie at all distinctive is its hero, a reckless L.A. cop named Riggs, a role that allows Mel Gibson to zip through the picture like a free electron. Riggs isn't actually trying to kill himself this time (as he was in the first movie), but he's still a wild man and Gibson is still having a great time playing him. It's a mischievous, sprightly performance: he treats the action sequences as if they were slapstick routines. (Unfortunately, the director, Richard Donner, doesn't have as light a touch.) Danny Glover plays his partner, Murtaugh, an easygoing, conservative black family man; he's mostly called upon to react with horror to Riggs' dangerous antics, and the joke of their relationship gets a little tiresome. (The effect, sometimes, is of a white guy doing heroic stuff while his black pal shuffles along beside him. Glover, a good actor, deserves better.) Joe Pesci does small wonders with his supporting role as a ferrety, motor-mouthed money launderer, and Joss Ackland glowers like Alastair Sim as the head villain, a South African diplomat who smuggles drugs. Also with Patsy Kensit. Jeffrey Boam wrote the screenplay. The score is by Michael Kamen, Eric Clapton, and David Sanborn.—T.R. (Sutton, Loews Orpheum, 8th St. Playhouse, Chelsea Cinemas, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and West Side Cinema.)

ROSEMARY WEBBER

At the Paris, "Eat a Bowl of Tea"

Les Liaison Dangereuses (1959)—Valmont and Juliette, the eighteenth-century characters in the Laclos novel, are former lovers who, writing to each other about their strategies, targets, and fresh conquests, turn love into something as studied and calculated as war. They take the love out of love. Modernizing the story, the director, Roger Vadim, ties things up rather neatly by having Valmont (in a tired, too-sweet performance by Gérard Philipe—his last) and Juliette (Jeanne Moreau at her ravaged best) married. In Laclos the pleasure seems to be in carrying out the plan, achieving the victory—a triumph of austere, rational conquest; in Vadim's version a sensuous aura surrounds and permeates the objects. The first scene of Marianne (Annette Stroyberg) in the snow, her mouth open in laughter for a romantic eternity, isn't on a much higher level than the *Playboy* bunnies of the month; Vadim uses sex and jazz all mixed together in a cheap and sensational way that was probably exotic for the French in the fifties. But, using these elements, he attempts to give them a rhythm and feeling that are, at least, unusually high-class commercialism. With Jeanne Valerie, Jean-Louis Trintignant, and Simone Renant. Background music by Thelonious Monk; party music by the Jazz Messengers, with Kenny Clarke. In French.—P.K. (Quad Cinema.)

Padre Padrone (1977)—The Taviani brothers, who wrote and directed this film version of Gavino Ledda's 1974 autobiography, have learned to fuse political commitment and artistic commitment into stylized passion. Ledda's story is about how he was enslaved as a child, imprisoned in a sheepfold, and forced to tend the family flock, and of how he fought his way out of the isolation and silence—how he struggled for words. The spirit of the film isn't naturalistic—it's animistic. And the Tavianis' technique is deliberately barbaric; their vision is on the nightmare side of primitivism, where the elements themselves are the boy's enemies. The grotesquely natural cruelty is mythological—almost rhapsodic. Though made in 16 mm., for Italian television, this extraordinary work—pungent and carnal, and in faintly psychedelic Romanesque color—took the two top prizes at Cannes. With Saverio Marconi, Omero Antonutti, Margella Michelangeli, and Ledda, as himself, at the beginning and the end. In Italian.—P.K. (Thalia SoHo; Aug. 13.)

Parenthood—The script, by Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel, is ambitiously constructed, tracing the relationships of several boomer-age parents with their kids, their siblings, and their own parents. The advantage of this arrangement is that none of the characters are onscreen very long: we have time to get sick of only about half of them, and some—especially the nervous, eager dad played by Steve Martin—are fun to watch. The drawback is that the movie has no drive. The dull title captures the tone precisely: the whole thing has been conceived generically, abstractly, and by the end the director, Ron Howard, is rushing from scene to scene tidying up loose ends, to make sure that each little individual drama gets its point across and that they all add up to a correct answer to the essay question "What is parenthood?" The mini-homilies consist of such startling bits of advice as "Give your kids some room" and "Watch out or you'll repeat your parents' mistakes." The movie tries very hard, but its wisdom is on the forlorn side. Also with Mary Steenburgen, Rick Moranis, Dianne Wiest, Jason Robards, Harley Kozak, Martha Plimpton, Keanu Reeves, and Tom Hulce.—T.R. (8/7/89) (34th St. East, Baronet, Coronet, U. A. East, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

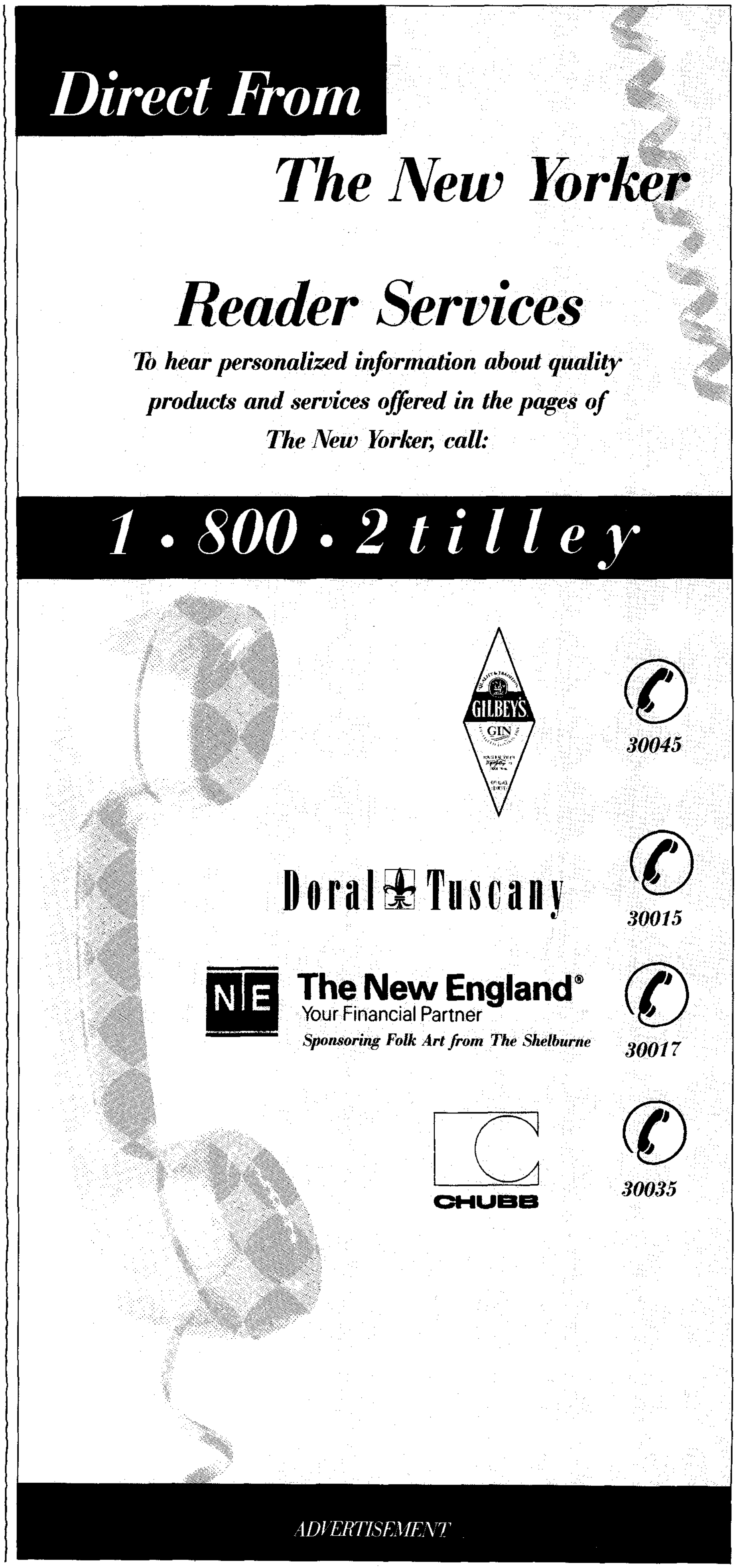
Scenes from the Class Struggle in Beverly Hills—The script, by Bruce Wagner, from a satirical sex-farce plot he devised with the director, Paul Bartel, calls for something like the goosey stylized acting that Charles Ludlam perfected at the Ridiculous Theatrical Company, but Bartel has directed with his usual home-movies sluggishness. Two houseboys, a cynic (Ray Sharkey) and a romantic (Robert Beltran), who work in adjacent mansions, bet on which one will be the first to make out with the other's employer—one a divorcée (Mary Woronov), the other a widow (Jacqueline Bisset). The households include various siblings, offspring, and hangers-on (Arnetia Walker, Ed Begley, Jr., Wallace Shawn, Paul Mazursky, Rebecca Schaeffer, Edith Diaz, and others)—all of them libidinous or gaga. Arnetia Walker manages to bring in some zesty horseplay, and Bisset's amused calm is occasionally pleasant, but mostly this is just mistimed, failed camp, and some of the lines that are meant to be screamingly dirty-funny come out screamingly sour.—P.K. (Carnegie Hall Cinema.)

Sex, Lies, and Videotape—Steven Soderbergh's smooth, handsome first feature generates a fair degree of psychological tension out of next to nothing. It's a triangle drama with a cunning little kink in it. The triangle consists of Ann (Andie MacDowell), a beautiful young Southern woman who has "never really been that much into sex"; her husband, John (Peter Gallagher), a sleazy yuppie lawyer; and her younger sister, Cynthia (Laura San Giacomo), who's sleeping with John. The kink is an old college pal of John's, named Graham (James Spader), a soft-spoken drifter who comes to town and changes everybody's life. Graham has sworn off sex, because, he says, it's the only way for him to stay honest; he's impotent, except when he's watching one of his dozens of home videos—all of them interviews he has conducted with women about sex. He's like a retired gunslinger, a laconic hombre who won't pull his artillery out of its holster because he's seen too much killin' already. This is "Shane" remade as a Southern psychodrama. For all the movie's surface sophistication, it's as simple as a fairy tale and as naïve as one of those Cassavetes pictures in which everybody faces up to the truth about himself. But there's some real conviction in it—a mixed-up fervor that keeps us watching. Named Best Film at this year's Cannes festival; Spader, inexplicably, was honored as Best Actor.—T.R. (8/7/89) (Cinema Studio.)

A Streetcar Named Desire (1951)—Vivien Leigh gives one of those rare performances that can truly be said to evoke pity and terror. As Blanche DuBois, she looks and acts like a destroyed Dresden shepherdess. No one since the early Lillian Gish and the almost unknown, plaintive Nadia Sibirskaya of "Menilmontant" (1926) has had this quality of hopeless, feminine frailty; Shakespeare must have had a woman like this in mind when he conceived Ophelia. Blanche's plea "I don't want realism . . . I want magic!" is central to "Streetcar." When Marlon Brando, as the realist Stanley Kowalski, cuts through her pretensions and responds to her flirting with a direct sexual assault, the system of illusions that holds her together breaks down, and he is revealed as a man without compassion—both infant and brute. Elia Kazan's direction is often stagy, the sets and the arrangement of actors are frequently too transparently "worked out," but who cares when you're looking at two of the greatest performances ever put on film and listening to some of the finest dialogue ever written by an American? When Viven Leigh says "The Tarantula Arms!" or "It's Della Robbia blue," you know how good Tennessee Williams can be. He adapted his play himself, with additional adaptation work by Oscar Saul.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 11-12.)

When Harry Met Sally . . .—Rob Reiner's movie, from a script by Nora Ephron, takes a screwball-comedy idea and inflates it like a rubber raft. Harry (Billy Crystal) and Sally (Meg Ryan) meet in the late seventies, rub each other the wrong way, and then, after breaking up with their partners, become close friends; all the while, they're conducting a running debate on the question "Can a man and a woman ever be just friends, without sex getting in the way?" It's a Rohmer movie played as a sitcom. Instead of plot, Reiner and Ephron provide shtick: their style is a self-satisfied compromise between realism and hokum. Crystal muddles through amiably, but Ryan flounders: the filmmakers give her impossible, unplayable scenes, and all she can do is be adorable. The movie keeps telling us that it's real and truthful and universal. Everything in it seems false. Also with Carrie Fisher and Bruno Kirby.—T.R. (8/7/89) (Beekman, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Regency. . . . ¶ Bay Cinema; through Aug. 8.)

Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown—The most original pop writer-director of the eighties, Pedro Almodóvar is Godard with a human face—a happy face. The artificial is what sends him sky high, and the Madrid of this film is (as the closing song has it) "Puro Teatro." This is a movie where after a while you can't tell sexy from funny. Pepa (Carmen Maura), an actress who works in TV and commercials, turns on her answering machine and learns that she has been jilted. Infuriated, she dashes around, on spike heels, in a short, tight skirt, trying to confront her longtime live-in lover, the elegant, vain Iván (Fernando Guillén). The women of the title include Iván's early lover (Julieta Serrano), his new lover (Kiti Manver), and two (Rossy De Palma and María Barranco) who are involved with his son (Antonio Banderas). Sleek-legged and chic, they run the theatrical gamut. In Spanish.—P.K. (11/14/88) (Carnegie Screening Room.)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THE
NEW YORKER

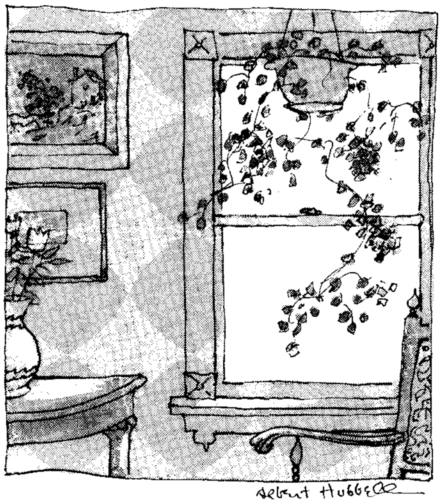
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

Donald Barthelme died the other day, at the age of fifty-eight. His departure came much too soon for his readers and stricken friends to attach to him that sense of satisfaction and gratitude one extends almost reflexively to an author who has achieved a longer span, but the brilliance and the dimensions of his work would have honored several lifetimes. He was the author of four novels (one to be published next year), nine collections of stories, and a celebrated book for children. His contributions to this magazine extended across twenty-six years, and included dozens of unsigned Notes and Comment pieces, some film criticism, and a hundred and twenty-eight stories—these last of such a dazzling, special nature that each one was invariably spoken of, here and elsewhere, as "a Barthelme." The tag was almost essential, because a typical Barthelme story was simultaneously rich and elusive, evanescent and nutritious, profound and hilarious, brief and long-term, trifling and heartbreaking, daunting to some readers and to others a snap, a breeze, a draught of life. During his lifetime, Donald Barthelme was variously summarized as an avant-gardist, a collagist, a minimalist, a Dadaist, an existentialist, and a post-modernist, but even a cursory re-reading of his work leaves one with the certainty that none of these narrowings are of much use. Categories seemed to accumulate around him of their own accord (the phenomenon must have pleased him, for he loved lists), but a brief rundown of some common ingredients in his fiction only brings back his unique swirl of colors and contexts: songs, museums, headlines, orchestras, bishops and other clerics, jungles, babies, commercials, savants and philosophers, animals (gerbils, bears, porcupines, falling dogs), anomie, whiskey, fathers and grandfathers, explorers, passionate love, ghosts (zombies and others), musicians, film-makers, recipes, painters, princes, affectations, engravings, domesticity, balloons, battalions, nothingness, politicians, Indians, grief, places (Paraguay, Korea, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Thailand), dreams, young women, architects, angels, and a panoply of names (Goethe, Edward Lear, Klee, Bluebeard, Cortés and Montezuma, Sindbad, Kierkegaard, President Eisenhower, Eugénie Grandet, Snow White, Captain Blood, the Holy Ghost, Perpetua, Daumier, the Phantom of the Opera, St. Augustine, St. Anthony, and Hokie Mokie the King of Jazz).

This explosion of reference, this bottomless etcetera, may account for his brevity—short stories and short novels—and for the beauty of his prose. His names and nouns were set down in a manner that magically carried memories and meanings and overtones, bringing them intact to the page, where they let loose (in the reader) a responding instinctive flood of recognition, irony, and sadness—too many emotions, in fact, to work very well within the formal chambers of a full novel. The Barthelme sentences, which seemed to employ references or omissions in the place of adjectives or metaphors, were sky blue—clear and fresh, and free of all previous weathers of writing. It was this instrument that allowed him to be offhand and complex and lighthearted and poignant all at the same time—often within the space of a line or two. In an early story, "Philadelphia," a man named Mr. Flax describes an imaginary tribe and culture in this fashion:

> The Wapituil are like us to an extraordinary degree. . . . They have a Fifth Avenue. . . . They have a Chock Full o' Nuts and a Chevrolet, one of each. They have a Museum of Modern Art and a telephone and a Martini, one of each. . . . They have everything that we have, but only one of each thing. . . . The sex life of a Wapituil consists of a single experience, which he thinks about for a long time.



Many readers had difficulty at first cottoning to writing like this. They were put off by Barthelme's crosscutting and by his terrifying absence of explanation, and those who resisted him to the end may have been people who were by nature unable to put their full trust in humor. Barthelme was erudite and culturally rigorous, but he was always terrifically funny as well, and when his despairing characters and jagged scenes and sudden stops and starts had you tumbling wildly, free-falling through a story, it was laughter that kept you afloat and made you feel there would probably be a safe landing. It was all right to laugh: sometimes (he seemed to be saying) that was the only thing we should count on.

All this took some getting used to—

readers who encountered his long and ironically twisted "Snow White" in this magazine in 1967 wrote us in great numbers to ask what had happened to them—but if you could give yourself to it (there was no code, no set of symbols, no key) you were all right. One writer here said last week, "Somehow, he taught us how to read him—it's almost the most surprising thing about him—and what had felt strange or surreal in his work came to seem absolutely natural and inevitable. And there were times, particularly in the Nixon years, when his stuff seemed more real—saner and much more coherent—than anything else going on in the world."

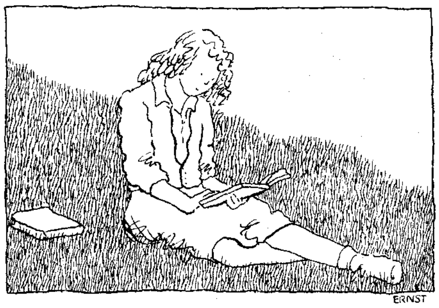
Donald Barthelme was tall and quiet, with an air of natural gravity to him—a *light* gravity, if that is possible. He had an Ahab beard and wore Strindbergian eyeglasses; some people thought he looked more postmodernist than he wrote. He was entertaining and sad, and without pretension. He took himself seriously but presented himself quietly. (Anyone who happened to see it must still remember a television interview, years ago, in which Barthelme responded to a question about another contemporary literary figure with a brief sigh and then said, "Yes, I know him. His big books are always leaning against my little books on the shelf.") He was a great teacher, unfailingly generous and hopeful in his estimation of beginning writers. He was busy in intellectual and literary circles, here and in Europe. He was a romantic and a family man (as anyone who reads him can see), and an exceptionally gentle and affectionate father. Many people, of all ages, seemed to find a father in him, in fact, and they are missing him now in a painful and personal fashion. One woman on our staff, a writer, said, "When he was writing a lot, you had this sense that there was someone else sort of like you, living in your city, and saying things that meant something about your life. It was like having a companion in the world."

And an older man, also a writer and contributor, said almost the same thing: "He always seemed to be writing about my trashiest thoughts and my night fears and my darkest secrets, but he understood them better than I did, and he seemed to find them sweeter and classier than I ever could. For a long time, I felt I was going to be all right as long as he was around and writing. Having him for a friend was the greatest compliment of my life."

•

IN the course of a five-minute news broadcast, we learn that the Stealth bomber flies, that a Star Wars test succeeds, and then that President Bush believes that the Russians are becoming more peaceful by the day. Not long ago, Admiral William J. Crowe, retiring chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and protector of the three-hundred-billion-dollar military budget designed to defend the Free World from Communism, was asked at a news conference whether he considered the Russians his enemy, and he replied, essentially, no. Now the chairman has gone further, and declared the basic premises of Cold War doctrine obsolete. He has done so, in full collaboration with the other chiefs of our armed services, in a hundred-and-sixty-six-page document called "1989 Joint Military Net Assessment." The booklet, published by the Pentagon in June with no fanfare, has received as little attention as its title seems to warrant. Yet its words, in their own dry way, herald the coming of a new world as dramatically as any official text could ever be expected to do.

Consider some of its pronouncements: "Since the late 1940s, the Soviets have demonstrated hesitancy to use military power as a means to achieve their foreign policy goals. . . . The primary Soviet concern . . . is the security and integrity of the Soviet homeland. . . . US forces present a credible deterrent against Soviet use of strategic nuclear weapons. . . . The Soviets' primary peacetime security objective is to deter war (particularly nuclear war) with the West. . . . In the past year, the Soviets have stipulated that, along with waging a future war as effectively as possible, the avoidance of war has now been codified as a primary objective of their doctrine."

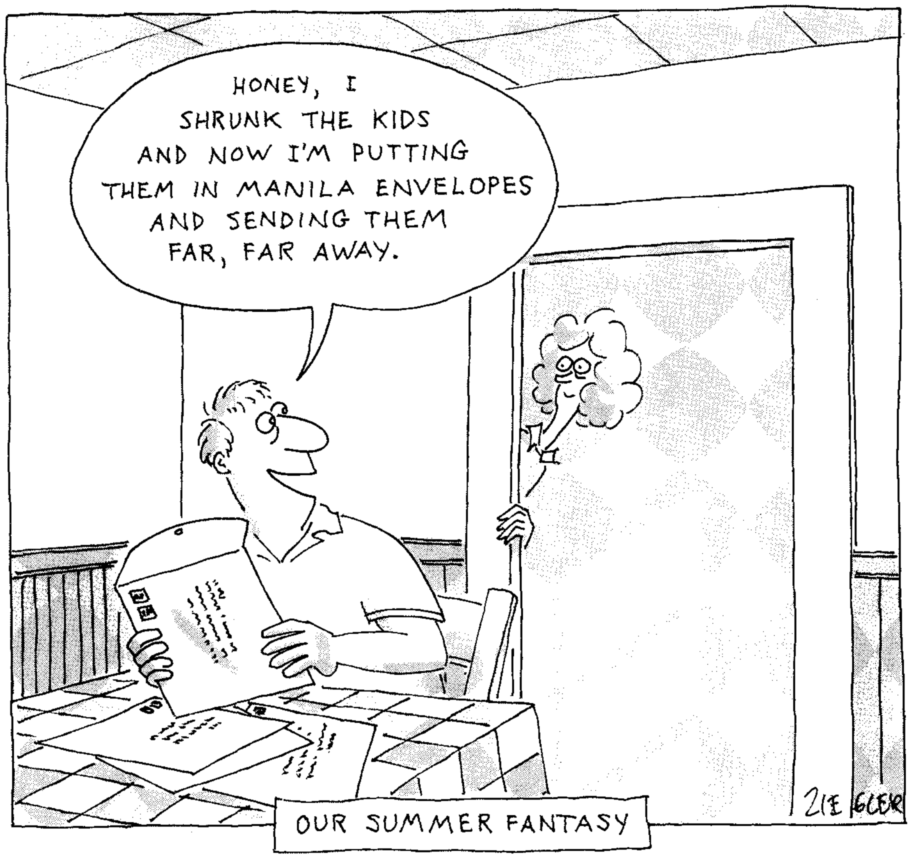


Furthermore, to the extent that the Soviet military has amassed missiles of sufficient power and accuracy to destroy a large portion of the American arsenal, it has done so, the document says, "as a more comprehensive form of deterrence, rather than as an expression of the belief that they could 'win' a nuclear war."

No more thoroughgoing revisionism has been witnessed in official quarters since the collapse of Nixon's détente—perhaps since the onset of the Cold War. The rationale for the Reagan nuclear buildup, the sharpest in two decades, was precisely that the Soviets avidly use force to achieve their foreign-policy goals, that their primary security objective is to expand across the globe, that they believe they could fight and win a nuclear war, and that America's forces present a window of vulnerability, inviting, rather than deterring, Soviet attack or intimidation.

Then, there is what may be the document's most breathtaking, if opaquely composed, passage: "The Soviet leadership would probably link any decision to use nuclear weapons to an assessment of the likelihood of imminent nuclear use by the enemy, or to actual enemy nuclear use." With this single sentence the Joint Chiefs of Staff lend their imprimatur to the most heretical of revisionisms, which until now all officials had taken great pains to deny, dismiss, and demean: that the Soviet military genuinely thinks we might launch a nuclear first strike, just as our military thinks the Soviets might; that the Soviets' talk of "encirclement" and "a hostile world" is not just the subterfuge of an evil empire bent on aggression; that they have considered us the enemy, just as we have considered them the enemy; that the Cold War is two-sided.

The chiefs are not entirely lax here in serving their institutional interests. They stress that our nation "must develop and deploy a robust ASAT [anti-satellite] capability at the earliest possible date," and that NATO "must" field new short-range nuclear weapons "to counter the significant threat posed" by similar missiles held by the other side. They also note the usefulness of new and rather costly ships, submarines, and jet fighters awaiting cash from Capitol Hill. Curiously, however, the goodies most vigorously demanded are at the moment either politically out of the question or certain to


HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS AND NOW I'M PUTTING THEM IN MANILA ENVELOPES AND SENDING THEM FAR, FAR AWAY.
OUR SUMMER FANTASY
ZIEGLER

• •

be approved with no contest; there seems to be a touch of the obligatory in the admonishments. Moreover, the chiefs present a rather sanguine picture of how the West would fare if a conventional war broke out in Europe. They acknowledge that the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies maintain "numerical superiority" in conventional ground forces, but hasten to add that this advantage is "significantly offset by Western leadership, morale, training, technology," and the relative reliability of America's allies. The chiefs here dwell more strongly than usual on the fragility of the Warsaw Pact forces. The Pact's troops are "not trained to the level" of NATO's. Their training is "simple and repetitive," their decision-making system "rigid and centralized." "The Western emphasis on initiative and decisionmaking at the lowest levels gives NATO an advantage in a fluid tactical combat situation where speed and flexibility are key." The conclusion, therefore: "The net assessment for the United States and NATO remains positive."

"In fact," the chiefs confess, "the world is changing; Soviet strategy and its objectives may be in transition." It is axiomatic that without the solid image of a threat no military establishment can thrive. There is a spectre haunting the Joint Chiefs of Staff throughout their "1989 Joint Military Net Assessment": the spectre of the vanishing threat.

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Chocolate Milk

SEVERAL weeks ago, when John-Ed Croft, a painter and prolific architect of schemes just cockeyed enough to work, announced the opening of the Chocolate Milk Art Gallery at his current abode, in an East Village building occupied by squatters, we noted it as a must-see. The other evening, accordingly, we made our way to the far side of Tompkins Square Park, where the last bistros and boutiques give way to a frontier of boarded-up tenements, and we saw John-Ed waving from a third-story window. He flung down the front-door key.

John-Ed, a compact fifty-two-year-old from Brooklyn, with a droopy gray mustache and wearing wire-rimmed eyeglasses and a cloth cap, met us at the top of the stairs and ushered us through a door whose only security feature was a rubber band and a nail. Beyond the door were two rooms—one with exposed brick and the other with mottled green wallpaper, and both lit by a dangling ceiling lamp that had been fashioned from a child's bicycle. John-Ed explained that he had moved upstairs from the basement last October, and that the space was then calf-deep in debris. It didn't approach its present state of cleanliness, he said, until he had solicited help by throwing a "dirt party" for about forty friends. The ensuing cleanup unearthed a few artifacts, and these were now displayed on a milk crate: a 1945 *News*, a 1909 penny, and a postcard from the Hotel New Yorker postmarked 1944. The Chocolate Milk Art Gallery's main attraction, however, was the works of twenty-four artists—most of them squatters—which included an American flag adorned with dollar bills and toy guns, and a crude cartoon of flying television sets scrawled on a detached refrigerator door. Three of John-Ed's own paintings—silhouettes of medieval figures in dignified dark-wood frames—inhabited a quiet corner and were partly obscured by some exposed electrical wires.

The Chocolate Milk Art Gallery borrowed its name from John-Ed's euphemism for beer. "I'm afraid to say 'Budweiser,' " he explained, handing us a sixteen-ounce tallboy. "If you're homeless and you want a beer, you're a drunk." Then he bounded off to schmooze among the guests—several dozen young artists milling about in bike-messenger regalia, dreadlocks, peasant smocks, and combat boots.

For fifteen years, John-Ed told us later, he worked in the shirt-and-tie world as a computer analyst. "People always told me I wasn't an artist," he said. "They said, 'Go do something else.' So I did something else." In 1985, having already been uprooted by a divorce, he joined the ranks of the homeless—enlisted, really—after a fire gutted his apartment, on Staten Island. All that remained of his possessions was a sports jacket and twelve paintings by him, and he carried these to a new home, in Central Park's Blockhouse—a decaying stone fort near 108th Street. There John-Ed developed a cheerful immunity to—or, at least, a tolerance for—the sordidness inflicted by a homeless life. Painting, he says, helped stave off wretchedness. The money he earned—usually about ten dollars a day—by trolling the streets for cans and performing odd jobs went for art supplies, cigarettes, and, of course, chocolate milk. Before leaving the Park on errands, John-Ed would bury his belongings for safekeeping. At one point, the Central Park soil contained no fewer than forty carefully wrapped canvases. "I practically needed a treasure map to find them," he said. After seven months, John-Ed's sleeping bag was stolen from its burial place, and he was forced to move into a G.E. refrigerator box—his "cardboard condominium"—parked beside St. Patrick's Cathedral. He shaved in a public bathroom in the Trump Tower.

In 1987, the Internal Revenue Service got in touch with John-Ed through a Brooklyn relative, demanded $11,486.72 in overdue taxes with interest and penalties from 1981, and placed a lien on his last remaining valuable, a 1981 Pontiac. "I'm living on the streets and I get this huge bill," he told us. "They thought maybe I was rich, or something." John-Ed contended that he had already paid the sum but had withheld his Form 1040 in protest against government military spending. Nevertheless, he resolved to pay off the debt, by presenting the I.R.S. with the equivalent value in redeemable cans. "Why not?" he said. "I can buy cigarettes or a hard-boiled egg with cans. Cans are the currency of the street." Two months later, John-Ed and about fifty supporters deposited thousands of cans—enough to fill three refrigerator boxes—outside the I.R.S.'s Church Street office. Although the collection fell short of the 229,735 cans required for full reimbursement, it may have made its point: I.R.S. officials refused to accept the bundles, but seem to have let the matter drop. "They haven't bothered me since," John-Ed said.

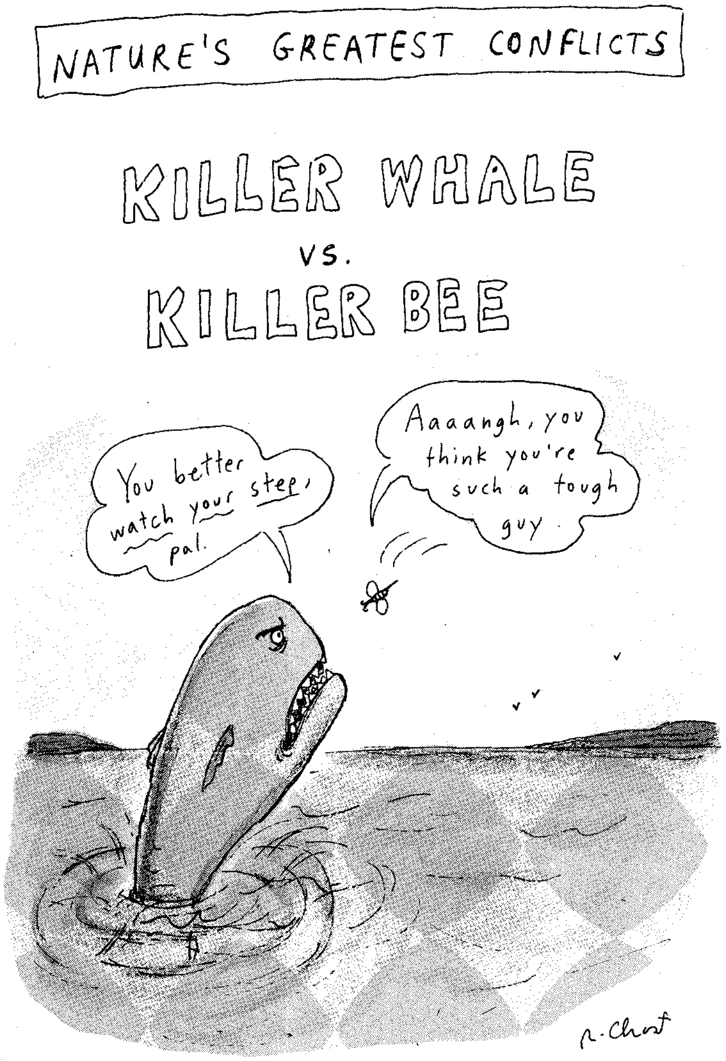
Last year, John-Ed got swept up in another bureaucratic row. The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, passed by Congress in 1987, requires the federal government to make suitable unused property available at a rent of a dollar a year to organizations that serve the homeless. John-Ed joined with four such organizations to sue five federal agencies for failure to comply. In September, a federal district court ruled in the plaintiffs' favor, and three months later it ordered the government to begin assessing its property within fifteen days. Uncle Sam has since invited John-Ed and others to apply for the use of over nineteen hundred properties, including several slightly used Arizona missile sites, portions of Valley Forge General Hospital, an Alabama ammunition plant, a Georgia submarine base, and part of NASA's space center in Houston. But John-Ed is holding out for an Air Force base, where he envisions building a "botanical garden" for artists, with hangars converted into studios and theatres. "They keep getting pushed down, down, down," he said, motioning toward his friends. "Imagine what they could create if they could live a little better."

Under the Hood

THE other afternoon, at a parking lot on the Lower West Side, we put a 1988 Ford Taurus station wagon at Chris Maynard's disposal. Maynard removed two flat foil-wrapped packages from a canvas shoulder bag and then lifted the hood of the Ford. "Veal scaloppine," he said, "with Genoa salami, aged provolone cheese, and Spanish onion." He laid the packages on top of the car's fuel-injector housing, wedged each one into place with a cone-shaped wad of foil, slammed the hood shut, and said, "Now we'll just let that cook awhile."

He headed into traffic, up West Street, in the general direction of the Bronx and Tony's Delicatessen, birthplace of the corned-beef doughnut. Maynard has an open mind and is prone to serendipitous detours. Maybe he would get to Tony's and maybe he wouldn't; in either case, he was unlikely to stay hungry. On the front seat lay a set of bound galley proofs of "Manifold Destiny: The One! The Only! Guide to Cooking on Your Car Engine," a soon-to-be-published collaboration between Maynard and Bill Scheller, who would have been along on the trip to the Bronx had he not been in the midst of a three-month detour to Spain.

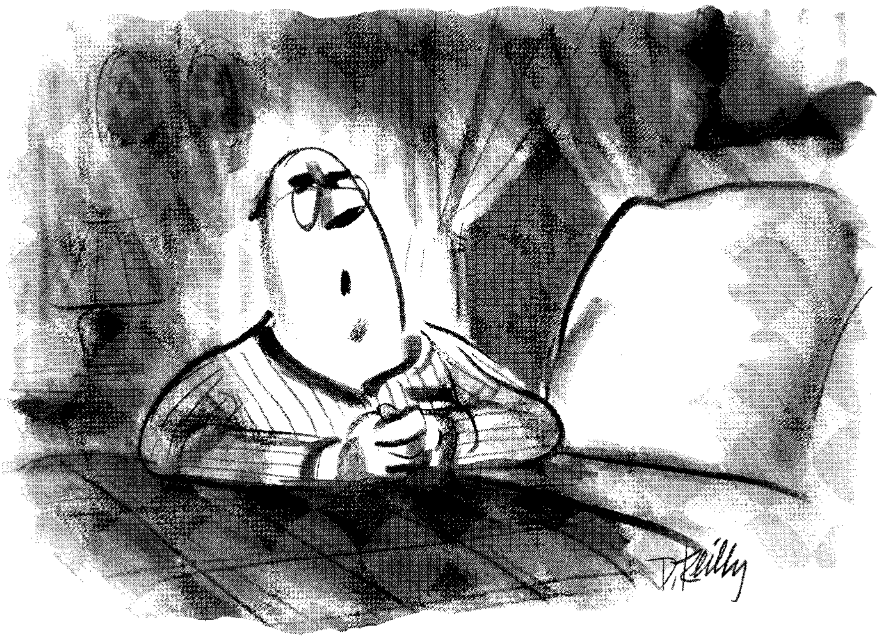
Maynard and Scheller began to explore car-engine cooking five years ago, when they warmed up some smoked brisket on a drive from Montreal to Boston. After that, each time one of them got behind the wheel he did so with a broader sense of purpose and adventure than most of his fellow-motorists. Quickly, the two men branched into stuffed eggplant, poached fillet of sole, and baked apples. Last year, when they steered a Lincoln Town Car through the One Lap of America rally, a marathon eight-day


NATURE'S GREATEST CONFLICTS
KILLER WHALE
VS.
KILLER BEE
You better watch your step, pal.
Aaaangh, you think you're such a tough guy.
R. Chast

drive around the republic, they got a concentrated chance to refine their techniques. Taking advantage of the Lincoln's spacious, eleven-by-thirteen-inch fuel-injector-housing surface and its piping-hot valve covers, they conducted successful experiments with ham steaks, pork tenderloins, and stuffed chicken breasts. They attracted a little publicity, and soon a cookbook became an inevitability.

Explicating a creation called Enzo's Veal ("in honor of the late Enzo Ferrari"), Maynard and Scheller write, "Start this in Manhattan and lunch will be ready in New Haven. Turn once, in Stamford." Despite such detailed instructions, they are aware that no two makes of engine behave identically. Chicken thighs that take three hours and forty-five minutes to cook under the hood of a Chrysler New Yorker may need about fifty minutes to become nicely browned inside an Olds Cutlass. "Manifold Destiny" preaches "the time-trusted method of temperature verification known as 'burn your finger.' " Repeatedly, the authors warn of the hazards of, say, sticking one's hands in the fan or doing something with a hot dog that would inhibit the free movement of the accelerator linkage. Maynard and Scheller dare to be poetic in naming dishes: Lead Foot Stuffed Cabbage, Pat's Provolone Porsche Potatoes, Thruway Thighs. Their chapter on Southern cooking offers a recipe for Blackened Roadfish. "Manifold Destiny" is dedicated to Molly and Pluggy, Scheller's half-Doberman/half-Labrador and Maynard's two-year-old Airedale, respectively. "Pluggy is my role model," Maynard said. "She's always ready for a good time."

Once, to accommodate a television crew, Maynard tried to cook an omelette in a Thunderbird, but the effort was subverted by a shoddy wrapping job and by "the Third World status of streets in New York City." This experience came to mind as he drove up the entrance ramp to the West Side Highway. "We may have seen that veal for the last time," he said as we rattled over the brick pavement. "Actually, the only thing I ever lost was a chicken breast—in Virginia. I was driving an '81 Toyota, usually a pretty good cooker. I put the breast on a little north of D.C., and somewhere near Richmond I pulled over to check and it was gone. Fortunately, I happened to be cooking a pork loin, too, so I ate that instead."


"Senate or House version, Thy will be done."

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After one rubbernecking delay—a three-car pileup in the southbound lanes—we made our way up the Henry Hudson Parkway, then over to the Mosholu Parkway, and within twenty minutes we had arrived at Tony's Delicatessen, on Bainbridge Avenue. Beyond the generally endearing fact that Tony's is an Italian-owned place that serves Jewish food as well as Italian to a mainly Irish clientele, Maynard goes there specifically for the corned-beef doughnuts: deep-fried agglomerations of nothing your doctor would recommend—"oily enough to require an E.P.A. variance on the Arctic tundra," according to Maynard and Scheller. It came as a disappointment to learn that there were none on the premises. Maynard was able to forestall starvation, however, because Manny Bonet, the chef at Tony's, is also the innovator of a triangular deep-fried concoction called the potato turnover.

Maynard ordered one of those and a cup of coffee. As he ate, we asked how he had discovered Tony's.

"I park my car a couple of blocks from here," he said. "Ironically, you can't cook in my car. It's a Volkswagen Rabbit, a diesel, with no good surface to attach anything to. The only thing that ever really worked was that first batch of smoked meat from Montreal. Driving from Philly to New York, I once tried to do some chicken breasts, but when I got to where I was going the chicken breasts were still sushi."

A cop car slowly cruised by, reminding Maynard that he had parked the Ford Taurus near a bus stop, in a less than strictly legal manner. He went outside, raised the hood, and said, "Mmm, smell that cooking!" Subtle hints of salami and onion hit our nostrils, followed by fresh Bx34 bus exhaust. "That's what I love about car-engine cooking," Maynard said. "Nothing beats stopping at a toll booth on the Garden State Parkway, checking under the hood, and having the smell of garlic and pork juice waft back at me."

Maynard's VW Rabbit was parked in a lot a block away, and he offered to show it to us. When we got there, however, he realized that he didn't have a key to get into the lot. That forced us to marvel at the Rabbit—missing right rear window, roof that had been walked on by a heavy person, graffiti on the hood—from a distance. A few doors down was Eddie's Delicatessen.

"They sell Irish bangers," said Maynard. "Want to check them out?"

Sure we did. They were in a freezer case—Irish Regular Pork Bangers and Irish White Breakfast Pudding. Each one looked as if it might fit neatly along the exhaust manifold of a Chevrolet Celebrity.

"How would I cook this sort of thing?" Maynard said, closing the freezer door. "I'd cook it in a frying pan on my stove. To be honest."

SUMMER DAY

1
Night beside me, I turn from her toward day,
Cloyed with the stillness of our common clay,
And twitted in the morning by the birds
For not delighting in their brightened gray.

2
Two radioed fiddles thread their minor thirds
Among the unmeaning chirpings of the birds;
In silent light, language is not yet up
And about: my late, light dreams are all of words.

3
Young, in the afternoon I'd wandered free
In the lost places I'd once thought to flee;
The Old Man of the Morning now, I'm found
Silent beside the loudly sounding sea.

4
"*The sun sees everything: we have our sight*
Only because of its all-seeing light."
Old pictures of Apollo labelled thus
Appall the wisdom of all-knowing Night.

5
The ardent hands of sunlight in the morning
Love the cool body of the land, but, scorning
Defacements of its personality,
Can get turned off with just a touch of warning.

6
My mind takes root in daylight, where I see
The meditative shore absorbed in sea
And thoughts of sea, and all that sea had thought
Of sky. I stand like an inverted tree.

7
July. There's "liquid" melody, the tune
Of treachery: the hidden, waiting moon
Now pours into the porches of my ear
Birdsong from somewhere in the afternoon.

8
Along the margin of the margin lies
The trembling threshold, set between the wise
And probing questions of the afternoon
And indoor answers where the daylight dies.

9
We bookworms of the Tale of Life, alas,
Consume each day what will have come to pass,
While the great Loafer, vagrant, beds him down
On annual leavings of the summer's grass.

10
July winds up its business there in town.
The vacancies of avenues will crown
The coming and majestic month of fire
In which the summer's engines will wind down.

11
Tinged with false promise, edged with polychrome,
The sunset's red drips up along its dome;
Tuning the corded jib sheet to the strum
Of evening air we make a run for home.

12
Twilight and meaning, darkness and rising hope
Stretched out across my path a twisted rope.
Last night, in simple truth, I fell asleep.
Today I trip over last evening's trope.

13
The grain all gathered, and the aftermath
All sifted, and the threshing-out of wrath
Complete, we're left with nothing more to glean
Than these leaves fallen on our homeward path.

14
Mingling with the steadier stuff that spills
Down from the fallen shadows of the hills,
From vanished cottage chimneys risen smoke
Assents to what the coming darkness wills.

15
A shriek from somewhere in the August night
Pierces me, of some animal in fright
Or in the cruel and warm embrace of death
That cries out just as fiercely in delight.

16
Night on the bay: the sound of daylight's daughter
When grabbed at by the abundant hands of water
(The singularity of the low moon
Laughing at the redundant waves that caught her).

17
The self-sustaining ardor of a bright
Candle flame, steady in this windless night,
Reflected in its tiny cup of oil:
It draws from its own image heat and light.

18
However fragile, callow and uncouth,
Brazen and shy, at least once, in her youth,
Everyone standing free of clothes before
Her pensive mirror will look just like Truth.

19
The moon shone in my cup of thought to pour
Therein her lewd light and its darker lore;
I was reminded by the glistening brim
Of lives I'd somehow led not long before.

20
I've painted, in high light, with colors of
Shadows cast by the dark itself, in love
With shows of blackness. May I play with light
When covering darkness fits me like a glove.

—JOHN HOLLANDER

THE TRICK OF IT

SHE'S coming.

I told you I made three attempts to get her to lecture and she wouldn't. Wouldn't, she said, couldn't—never lectured. But then I had this sudden inspiration—how do these things come to one?—and dashed off a note (in my own hand this time, which is perhaps what did the trick, because, as all the world knows, she always writes by hand herself) saying could my students talk to *her*? Adding how her books had made them question some of their most fundamental which-whats and indeed set off the most extraordinary ferment of intellectual whatever. It'll end up with her talking to them, naturally, so we're all happy.

Now of course I can't help asking myself *why*? Why's she coming? What's in it for her? She must know what it's going to be like. A grim little gathering in my rooms, with half the students dumbstruck and the other half patronizing, then dinner with a handful of academics in unsympathetic disciplines who'll pretend they don't know who she is, then a night in some bleak guest room in a windswept corner of the campus, and then no one to tell her where to find breakfast.

I mean, would you? Should I? Well, of course we should—we do it all the time. That's us. That's our dreary trade. But should we if we were her?

I also can't help asking myself what's in it for me. Of course, I shall take the opportunity to try out my theories about the superstitious dog in the first chapter of T.S.R. and the psychic lemur at the end of F.D.D.S., and to find out whether K.G. and the boy in "Scatterbrain" are based on D.B. and her son (cf., if you've forgotten who D.B. is, my letter to you approx. MDLXIX in what will surely one day be my Collected Correspondence), and, just possibly, rather late in the evening over the brandy glasses, whether the Palace of Long Afternoons in T.S.R. is in any way autobiographical, and why things in her books are always catching fire. (Even in W.W., which I always think of as a relatively uneventful sort of book, the family refrigerator suddenly bursts rather portentously into flame for no very good electrical reason.) But do I really want to be told the answers? Isn't it cheating? Won't it take all the fun out of my researches?

I suppose she just wants a little trip. A day off. Someone else doing the cooking and deciding what to talk about.

I don't think I want to meet her at all. I expect my rivals in the field all know her personally, but that's no concern of mine. I don't know why I call them rivals. That's not how I think of them. Fellow-specialists. Comrades in arms. I expect my esteemed colleague Vlad the Impaler is always masterfully sweeping his specimens off on joint family holidays in Tuscany before he puts them into the killing-bottle and pins them into his collection. And I'm sure that creepy little woman from somewhere in Pennsylvania who can't spell "heuristic"—Dr. Stoff, or Swoff, or whatever she's called—is over here every summer with little jars of home-made arse salve, weaseling her way in to dinner. I always thought we in Britain were above such things. Or, rather, I never thought anything at all. Could this just be lack of imagination? Or is some unconscious resistance at work here? And doesn't the unconscious have its reasons that reason knows nothing of? Maybe the sight of her there at the station in all her circumstantiality—I mean, in an x-colored coat and y-colored shoes, z inches shorter than me—will destroy the magic. I shake her hand, and feel not the virtue in her flowing into me but the virtue in me leak away into her! Flesh! We're not into flesh, in our trade. So then how do I teach on, magicless, to the end of the term—the end of the year—the end of my career?

I say z inches shorter than me. $z = 5$. I've just looked in my notes. Oh God, there's going to be nothing but disappointment in meeting someone you know everything about already. There's something I don't know? Then I know where to look it up. I know her mind and I know her heart, and I know them backward, forward, and sideways. I know them better than she knows them herself. I know what she looks like. I know what she looked like when she was twelve and when she was seventeen. Seeing her in her x-colored coat and y-colored shoes is just going to reduce her to a single set of arbitrary particulars.

I can't bear the thought of introducing her to people. There is no way of saying, "And this is . . . " (I can't bear even to say it to you) without sounding either overawed or altogether too casual. In fact, I shall introduce her not as J.L. but as Mrs. M. I shall introduce her as Mrs. M.

"We're all just as excited as we can be about your choice for lunch, sir!"

because, in the eyes of God, Mrs. M. is her name. Not many people know this, apart from me and (I assume) you and (I think) God. I usually call her Mrs. M. to myself. When I have to refer to her in my thoughts, in the course of formulating some professional judgment. A thread of residual Manichaeanism, I think to myself, runs like a seam of black coal through the complex geology of Mrs. M. I am too scrupulous to drop her name even to myself, you see. So I certainly don't want to go littering the floor of the faculty dining room with it. We like to keep the place reasonably clean.

But then I can't go round saying, "And this is Mrs. M.," when even the least literate half-wit in Applied Cryogenics can see that in fact it's *her*.

What you may not know is that Mr. M. was a rare-book dealer. He made himself as scarce as his books, to turn a bit of a phrase, some years ago. Well, fourteen years ago. But who's counting? Only God and me, probably.

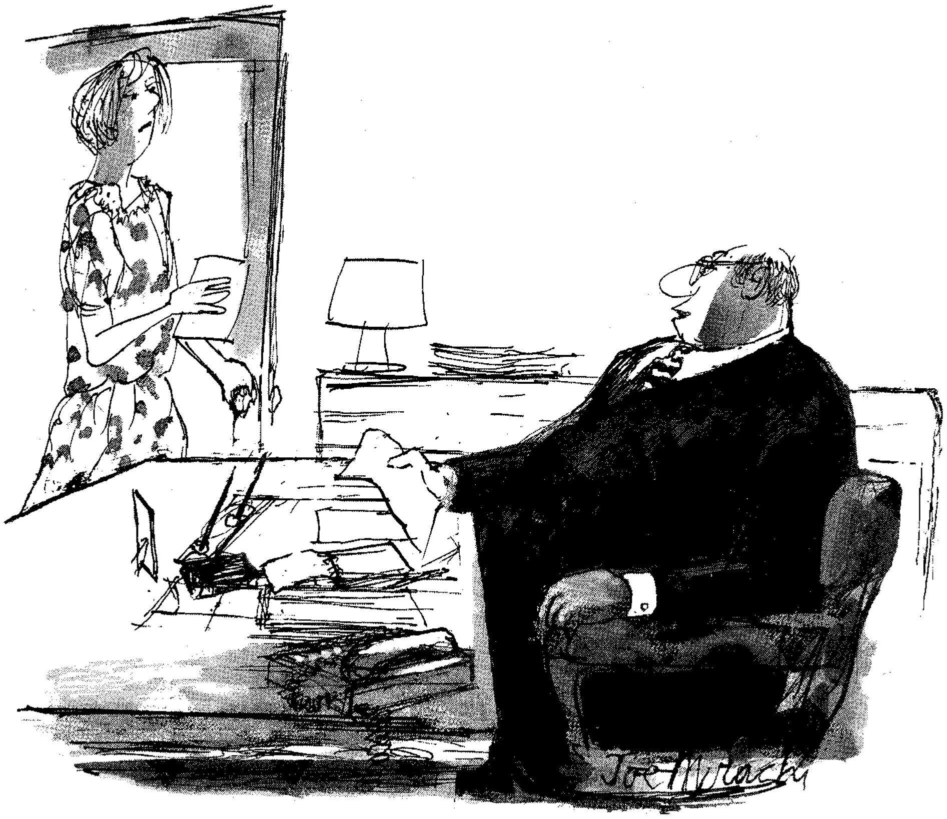
I realize now, now that I've said it —and I mean now, between the last paragraph and this—that I am serious about my second thoughts. But I mean *seriously* serious. I absolutely do not wish to meet this woman.

Well, this must seem all very ridiculous to you in the sunshine out there in Melbourne. I don't suppose you've ever got into these difficulties with your friend Mr. Goethe, have you? But she is good, you know, my Mrs. M. That's the maddening thing. She can do it, whatever it is that these people do. The closer I've looked during these twelve years, the better I've thought she did it. And the less I've understood what it is the buggers do.

Oh God, how would you like it if you heard that your Mr. G. was on Qantas even now, and you knew you had to meet him at the airport and show him Melbourne and ask him a few not entirely idiotic questions about the composition of "Faust" and the language of "Elective Affinities"? And go on teaching him for the rest of your life?

I shall report anon. You are keeping these letters, aren't you? You are storing them in steel filing cabinets guaranteed proof against white ants and bushfires? They may, in years to come, turn out to constitute my entire literary remains; they may prove to be the text of my long-awaited "J.L.: A Critical Study."

FUNNY occasion. *Funny* occasion! I mean the visitation from the subject of my studies.



"*Hold all calls, Miss Baker. I won't be visible this morning.*"

First thing to report: she is *absolutely ordinary*.

Let us define our critical vocabulary. I mean that were you to introduce her to your genteel but semi-literate family, or I to my semi-genteel and quarter-literate one, they would not raise an eyebrow. She is quiet-spoken, slightly plumper than I expected from the photographs, almost motherly. She didn't want to talk about books, least of all hers, and when forced to by some of my more obstreperous overachievers she seemed slightly perplexed, as if she had found these volumes with her name on the title page lying on her bookshelves one day and couldn't quite account for their presence. And what she said about them had a wonderful dullness and brownness, like the linoleum in some old-fashioned public library. She said it was important to make the reader feel at home in a book. She said she had found it was no good trying to write about characters she didn't respect. You should allow yourself no more than one major and one minor coincidence per book. Et cetera. If the faculty board had heard such things on my lips I should certainly find myself looking for other employment in the coming academic year, probably as an encyclopedia salesman. But coming from her, of course, they had a most impressive air of gnarled integrity, of hard-won simplicity.

And everybody in the faculty dining room afterward was very impressed. The Bald Eagle put his head a little on one side as he chewed, and watched her silently with those impassive predatory eyes. The good Pope John himself beamed and chuckled and raised his hand in blessing. They all knew who she was, of course, though she is disconcertingly more mobile and alive than you'd guess from still photographs. Even the women thought she was wonderful. Or at any rate this is what La Beldam Sans Merci whispered to me over the Returned Trays. "Isn't she wonderful?" said the Beldam, with that dreadful little grin she has, and that dreadful little flickering of the eyelids. And for once the Beldam was right. Wonderful is *precisely* what she is. Like the Queen.

The Queen! Yes! That's what she's like! Or rather she's like what the Queen would be like if the Queen were less like the Queen. I mean, if she didn't talk in a funny voice, if she

GLADYS TOOK HER HIGHBALLS VERY SERIOUSLY.

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wrote books or taught the Romantics, like everyone else. She has that same maddening air of being quietly and unshakably right, of being absolutely who she is, and of considering this an entirely sufficient explanation for her presence in the world. She is *our* Queen—by the Grace of God Defender of the Fiction, Empress of Character, and Sovereign of the Blessed Plot.

I mock, but only the better to express my awe. Because in our age of doubt and relativism, the survival of such a stable literary monarchy, such wonderfulness, must be the envy of the world.

I think she is at peace with herself. (A sudden shift of authorial tone here toward the reverential, placing, no doubt, considerable strain on the reader's flexibility of response.) To see this simple monarch, this . . . this *woman*, sitting with such modest dignity amidst my students and colleagues, talking to the former about how to find a good literary agent, and to the latter about gardening and cats, touched my heart most strangely. She talks, I should say, quietly and sparingly. And she listens when other people talk. She has a certain way of looking at you while you're talking. . . . Well, she doesn't blink. That's it. It's taken me all this time to think what it is that's so striking about that look of hers. You talk, and she looks at you with those thoughtful eyes (hazel, if you like to know these things), and she doesn't blink or look away, so you find yourself saying rather more than you intended. And no doubt she's making a mental note of it all and planning to put you into her next book—but let her, let her! I can think of no happier fate than to be lured in through those ever-open doors, taken to pieces inside that well-concealed brain, cleaned up, redesigned, made credible, given a function in some properly organized plot, and then reborn through those motherly fingers; to become ink (blue, Swan) emerging from the nib (gold, 18k.) of her pen (black, Waterman's); and to be laid out (on the luxurious hundred-gram Conqueror bond she always uses) beneath the eyes of all literate mankind and all eternity. You see what I mean about her being the Queen.

I suppose I did indeed talk rather a lot. Not at dinner. At dinner I sat in silence like a proud owner, watching everyone else as they first tiptoed admiringly round her, then succumbed and talked about not just gardening and cats but their childhoods and their parents. In the common room afterward, though, I got her to myself, and I told her all about—well, yes—my childhood and my family. About my mother and my Auntie Annie, and Ted and June, and Griffins, the newsagents. My God, this is the woman I have devoted the last twelve years of my life to! Alone together at last. Naturally I had to tell her things. I have to confess, though, that I went on talking even when the X-ray equipment was no longer focussed on me. I mean when I was walking side by side with her under the uncertain street lighting in the remoter parts of the campus, escorting her back to one of our grim but serviceable guest rooms at the end of this remarkable evening. But this time I was telling her—this is too shameful—about my views, so dear and familiar to you, on the mathematical representation of narrative time scale, and she was listening as intently as ever, and smiling as warmly. Smiling? you query keenly. How do I know she was smiling when we were walking shoulder to shoulder, our eyes unable to leave the dim concrete pathway ahead for fear of stumbling over something hard, or stepping into something soft? Because I could feel the smile on my shoulder, through the sleeve on my jacket. The warmth of it, you see. Like deep-heat treatment with ultrashort radio waves. Have you ever had it? I had it for my shoulder last year, after the window fell on it. You can't see anything, you can't feel anything on your skin. But there is a sense of internal well-being. It was the same sensation exactly as we walked past Low-Temperature Physics and the hockey pitches. In the same shoulder.

So that was my visitation from the Muse, my brush with the divine fire. A brief handshake at her door, another of the smiles, and I was walking back to my own rooms. And in the nick of time, you murmur coldly. Any further exposure to this particular sunshine, and the patches of strange pigmentation of my prose style would have begun to spread uncontrollably. And yes, I was a little shaken, I have to confess, as I turned out of Rutherford Way into Joliot-Curie Circle, and the late autumn wind set the old newspapers dancing in front of Human Disciplines. Should I bring the same dispassionate eye as before to her work, which after all was *my* work? I have in the past (as you know) had reservations about some aspects of the oeuvre. But as I strode along Dirac Drive, and the milkman rattled his bottles outside Machine Intelligence, I couldn't remember what they were.

SWISS ARMY GARDEN TOOL

Hold on, though, you think. Don't put this letter in the envelope just yet. Write a "P," you urge me, and then an "S." Let's discuss this a little further. Because, with your usual acute eye for the text, you have noticed a tiny discrepancy in the account above.

Milk bottles. The clashing of by milkman outside Machine Intelligence. Do we sit *that* long over the port at this ancient university, you ask. Or was that brief handshake at the door of the guest room not quite so brief after all?

Well. All right. Yes. There is no great lingering over the *digestifs* here, if only because the senior common room is locked up for the night by eleven-thirty, as you probably remember. The phrase "brief handshake," it's true, doesn't fully cover the events outside the guest-room door.

You wait, gravely.

No, no, no. Not like that at all.

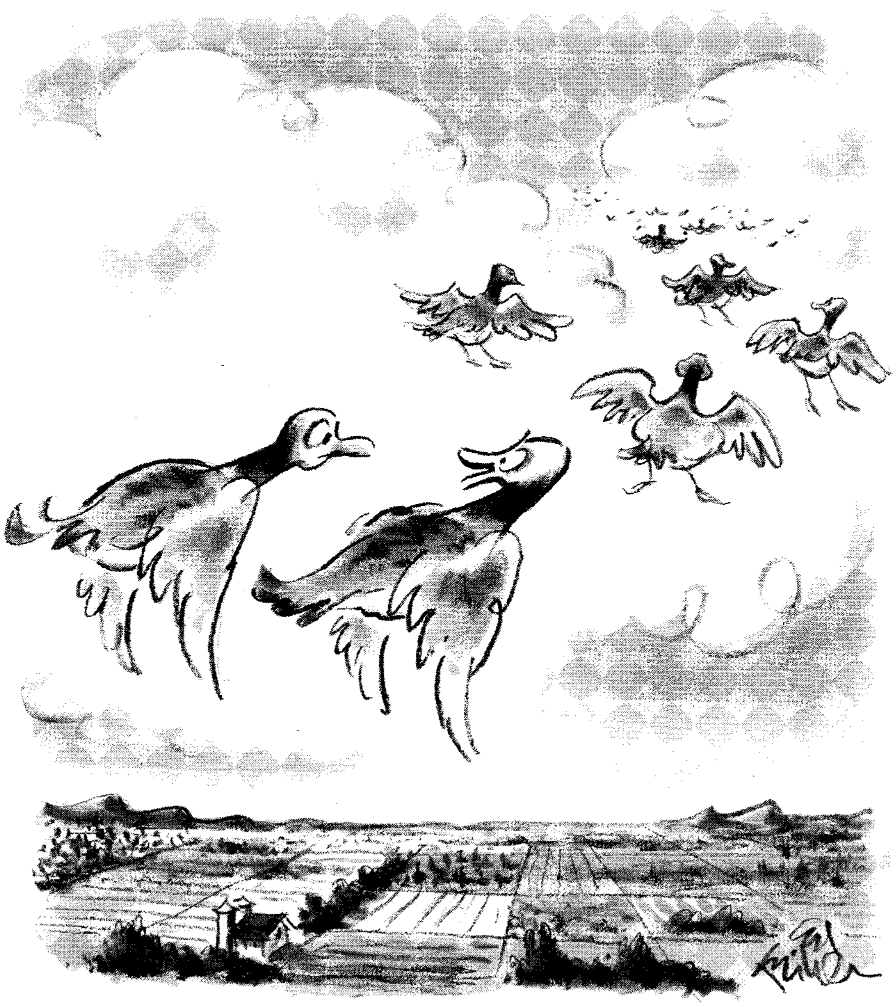
I stopped, when we had got to within some two to three yards of the guest-room door, and said, "Well . . . ," in a valedictory and regretful tone, which I think you will agree is the usual way of approaching the end of an evening. She stopped and replied in similar style. (I think her actual words were "Yes, well . . . ") I took her hand. I thanked her for coming. She thanked me for inviting her. Nothing odd so far, of course. If the conversation had ended at that point I should have been passing Machine Intelligence in Dirac Drive some seven hours before the milkman got there. But then she said, "I'd ask you in for a drink, only of course there's nothing to drink." Still not too surprising. But then I said, "Oh, as a matter of fact I put a bottle of whiskey on your dressing table for you, just in case you felt like a nightcap when you got back." A little surprising? Mildly surprising, I think. I don't make a habit of supplying visiting lecturers with private bottles of Scotch, I can assure you. (Did you find one on your dressing table when you came and gave us your thoughts on Mörike, the Middle Years?) It certainly took her a little aback, anyway, because there was a perceptible pause before she replied. Then she smiled. And then she said, "Come in."

I see an eyebrow moving a fraction of an inch farther away from me beneath my feet down there in Melbourne. Wait, though—we haven't got to the really odd bit yet. The really odd bit was that when she had unlocked her room and we went inside there was no whiskey on the dressing table. It had vanished.

Well, things are always vanishing from rooms. Radios, complete stereo systems. The disappearance of the odd bottle of whiskey is no great mystery. But I could see, from the way she smiled at me, that she didn't believe I'd ever put it there in the first place. Now, here's the weird thing. Nor did I.

I suddenly couldn't remember putting it there. I could remember remembering it. That's to say, I could remember that when I had said, outside the door, that I had put a bottle of whiskey on her dressing table it was because I remembered putting a bottle of whiskey on her dressing table. But now a terrible suspicion came to me. What I had remembered was perhaps not putting the whiskey there at all but *imagining* putting it there. A passing fantasy had somehow lost its label inside my head, and been filed with remembered events.

As you can imagine, I was very shaken. In my professional confidence, first of all. To her it matters not at all whether an actual refrigerator in the exter-



"Word is we're being held up by a major flight of capital."

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nal world once burst into flame or whether the event happened only inside her imagination. Or, for that matter, whether she thinks she remembers it even though she in fact invented it or whether she thinks she invented it when in actual fact it really happened. Why should she care, if it makes the effect she intends? But to us, to you and me, these fine distinctions are vital. They are the essence of our trade.

I was also shaken because she could see that I was shaken. As I stood looking, shaken, at the empty dressing table, I caught sight of her reflection in the mirror, and her reflection was not looking for the whiskey. It was looking at me and smiling. It seemed to me that she (or her reflection) had understood only too clearly about my little confusion of fact and fiction. She may even have found it somewhat suggestive that I had got my trade mixed up with hers, as if our hair, say, or our feet had suddenly become curiously entangled.

So, an odd moment, certainly, but was it worth describing it? It led nowhere, a meaningless eddy in the current of events. Since there was nothing in the room to drink, there was, ipso facto, no drink for this little episode to lead to. Well, there was water in the taps at the handbasin in the corner. And this, in fact, is what we resorted to. She went silently to the basin, poured a glass of water, and offered it to me. I drank it in silence (obviously). She watched me in silence. Thoughtfully. When I had finished she refilled the glass and drank a little water herself. (There was only one glass.) I silently watched her in my turn. (In my case because I couldn't think of anything to say.) After a while she sat down on the edge of the bed and looked thoughtfully at the floor. The floor interested her at least as much as I did. She took another sip, and then she held out the glass to me. I sat down beside her on the edge of the bed (there was nowhere else to sit) and took a sip. I gave her the glass. She sipped. She handed the glass to me. I sipped.

I to her. Sip.

She to me. Sip.

The glass was empty. I turned to her. We had now been silent for a number of minutes, and it seemed to me high time that one of us said something. I was not sure what words would come out. Perhaps something about the flaming refrigerator or the psychic lemur, at last. Or perhaps just "The glass is empty." But I said nothing. She was smiling again, and her lips were gleaming wet from the water. This is why I kissed them, because there was water on them and the glass was dry.

—Hold on a moment, I can imagine you saying at this point.

What is it?

—On a point of academic interest. This descent upon her lips is merely one single move in a whole campaign. What interests the outside world, surely, is not the tactics but the strategy. At what point did you actually decide on this course of action?

What course of action?

—Making a pass at her?

The dismissive coarseness of your expression is inappropriate. I was not making a pass. I know what passes are. I have made passes. I have had passes made at me. I have described some of these passes to you in earlier letters. This was not a pass. This was mutual. Nor did I decide. I knew. We both knew. She knew that I knew and I knew that she knew.

—When?

What?

—When did you know?

I'll tell you. We knew as soon as I met her at the station. I stepped forward as she walked down the platform and I smiled. She smiled. I took her hand and introduced myself. She looked at me, and there was the faintest suggestion of speculation in that look. Perhaps because it went on for a fraction of a microsecond too long. So then I knew. And she knew that I knew. And I knew that she knew that I knew. And she—

—Yes, yes, yes (you interrupt). But what about the bottle?

What?

—The bottle of whiskey. Are you telling me you put it into her room, or imagined that you might put it into her room, or whatever you or your unconscious did or didn't do, after you met her? When she was already occupying the room?

Obviously not. I imagined putting the bottle of whiskey into her room when I collected the key from Administration.

—Before you went to meet her at the station?

Naturally. But that was merely something that flashed into my mind and vanished again. A possibility. One has to be prepared for every eventuality.

I assume you have insurance against various remote catastrophes. That doesn't mean you *expect* your snug little home to be consumed by bushfires or white ants.

—The Durex Fetherlites.

What are you talking about?

—The three Durex Fetherlites you bought. Don't raise your eyebrows in some ridiculous attempt at denial. Everybody in the world knows by now. You bought them from the machine in the bogs at the Students' Union, after all. A member of the faculty running into the Union, changing a fiver for five ones from the secretary of Rag Week, then rushing excitedly into the gents'—what do you think they thought?

I have long campaigned for a machine in the senior common room for precisely such emergencies.

—This was an emergency?

Not exactly. It seemed prudent to take out an additional policy.

—This was *after* you'd met her at the station?

Exactly. Look, I had ten minutes between the seminar and dinner. . . .

No, I shall certainly not post this letter. Now I know that you will never read it I can be completely frank. Because the terrible truth is this. It seemed to me, even as I broke it, that I had discovered a new taboo governing mankind, one that must have existed unknown since the dawn of time until I stumbled upon it yesterday evening—a taboo against intercourse with an author on your own reading list. New to me, at any rate. I never heard lewd references to it in the changing rooms at school, not even from Tony Gleat, who made obscene reference to the charms of his own and other people's mothers. I have never come across it in Sophocles or the *News of the World*. This is worse than the love that dare not speak its name; this is the love that doesn't even have a name to speak. Somewhere in common or statute law there must be a distant parallel; illicit sexual relations with a reigning monarch, perhaps. Is it a taboo that you have ever come across? You have probably considered it no more than I ever did. Less, in fact, since your chances of sharing a glass of water late at night on a narrow guest-room bed with Goethe or Mörike down there in Melbourne are so remote. But when you think about it—as you suddenly are at this present moment—when you think of your hand—yes, *that* hand, it doesn't matter which—either of the hands with which you were so recently typing Goethe's name in reverential tones—feeling the irresistible smoothness of his knee . . . now sliding under his skirt . . . now reaching the lace trimming along the edge of his knickers . . . then at once you feel (am I right?) the authentic shock of sheer moral horror.

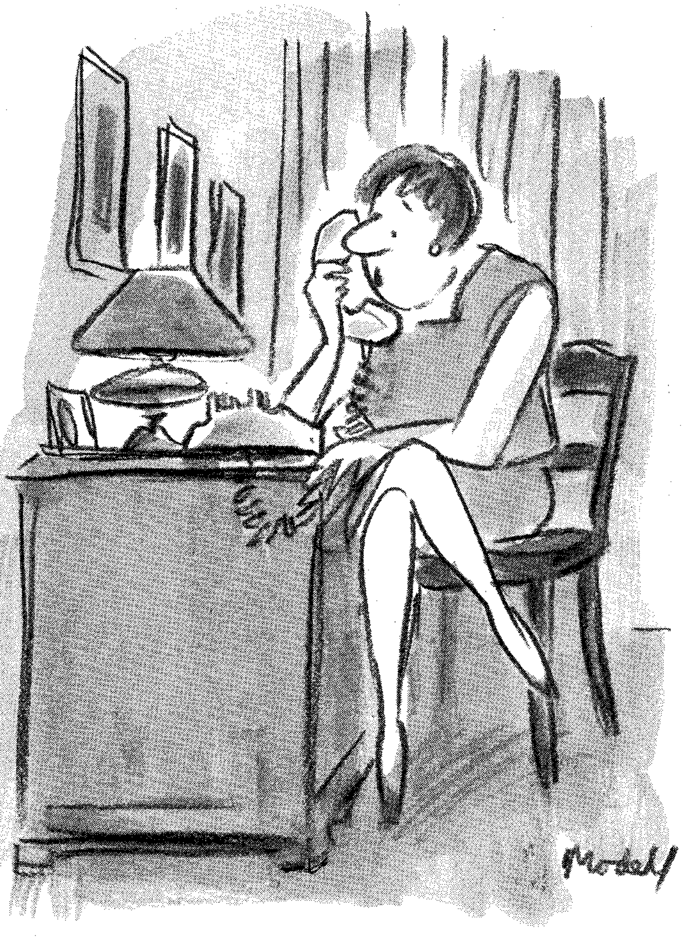
One's sense of outraging a divine sanction is made more acute (don't you feel, now that you find yourself in your imagination alongside me on the bed?) because one's desire contains an element of bald professional interest. Unwrapping this particular parcel is what one is paid to do, after all. Patiently, over long years, using nothing but one's native intelligence and sensibility, plus a set of pink file cards and a little Olympia portable given one by one's parents as a graduation present, one has unpicked the knots, folded away the sheets of brown paper for use next Christmas, lifted boxes out of packing. Now, suddenly, one has only to undo a button here and a hook there, and gently slide back the innermost wrapping, to get to the very heart of the mystery, to discover things that one never guessed one would know in one's lifetime, never knew that one *wished* to know. . . .

And now almost wishes one didn't know. I know, for instance, that— No, this is something I can't tell even you.

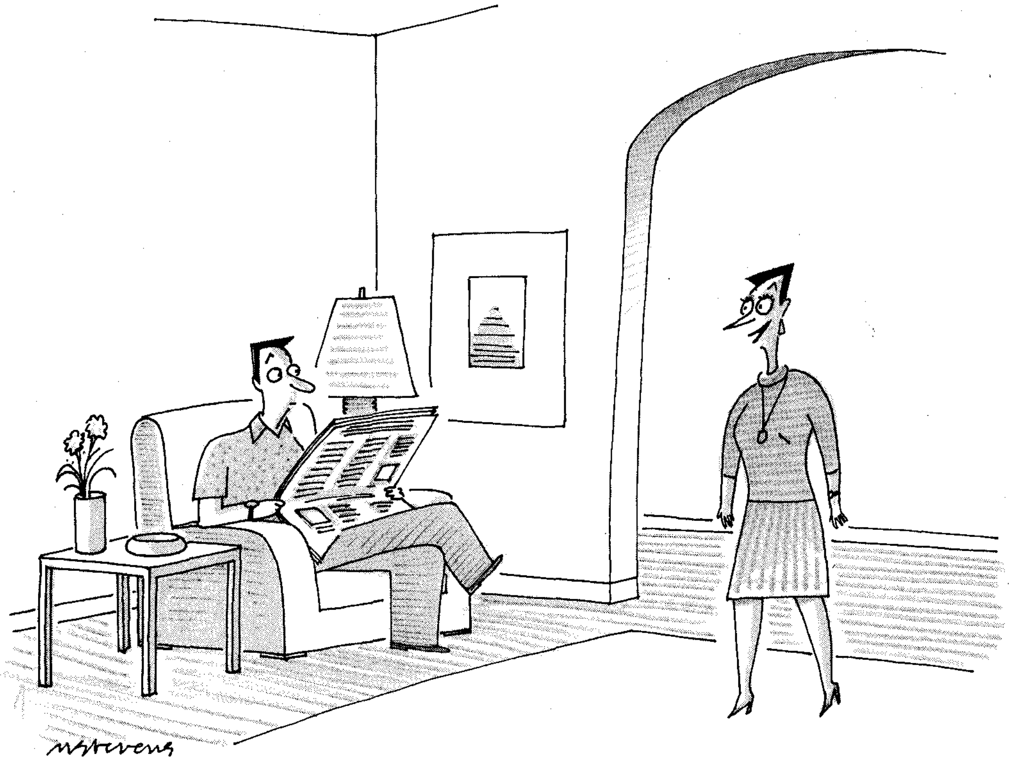
Though since I've definitely decided not to send you this letter, I suppose— No. Sorry.

—Oh, come on, you say. (Or would say, if you got this letter.)

Very well, then. You need a bit of a shock. Listen: I know that her underwear doesn't match. That is how she is now fixed in the annals of scholarly inquiry. With white knickers and peach bra. Not, of course, that I intend to include this fact in my lectures. Not that I am thinking of even letting it drop in private conversation with my postgraduate students. But it will be there at the back of my mind as I re-



"We already gave on our other phone."



"Like my new haircut?"

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read T.B.A.D. It will inform my perception of the novels.

If only I hadn't found out, I could have imagined her white with white.

But then if I hadn't found out it would never have occurred to me to imagine it.

Perhaps she is usually white with white—has been white with white every other day of her professional life. (Or black with black—I'm not narrow-minded about this.) Perhaps there just happened to have been some entirely untypical disaster with the washing machine, say, or some confusion in her packing for the trip, which would never be repeated, so that marking "peach with white" against her name is entirely misleading. I was deeply shocked by this appalling solecism, it's true. But then I was moved by the artlessness of it. Suddenly she seemed hopelessly vulnerable, and of course at once I became wild to storm these melting walls. So then I triumphed in my pleasure and conquest; and she I may say in hers; and each of us in each other's. And part of my triumph was one sweet evil thought that I will confess to you, *hypocrite professeur—mon semblable—mon frère*, but to no one else. I couldn't help thinking that this was a revenge for all these long years when she had been up there, oblivious of me, and I had been down here gazing so intently up at her. Because here she was gazing no less intently up at me; and for that short time she knew me. She knew me as I knew her, and we were equal.

And this sweet evil thought was followed by another. In one huge bound, it occurred to me, I had overtaken the dreaded Impaler. He hadn't got this far in his researches. He was going to rush into print only half prepared! While the wretched Dr. Sproff, or Snoff, it seemed to me, would have been well advised to find some other line of work, for which nature had equipped her better.

There. You've dragged it out of me at last. The whole truth, as always.

And so, with the sea breaking on the rocks, and the orchestra thundering, and the eerie horrors howling, and the little white scruples scrupling thinly in the wind, I will bring this mighty missive to a close. It is the day after these strange events, and the darkness is coming down again. I shall just have time to drop the letter in that postbox on the corner of Dirac Drive before I compose an expression of studious blandness on my face to baffle the envious and perhaps lubricious speculations of my colleagues at dinner.

Or rather before I *don't* drop it into the postbox. Because I'm *not* sending it, am I?

But if I don't, then it won't be curated where it belongs, with all the other letters in that antproof steel filing cabinet of yours.

I shall leave the decision until I am standing in front of the postbox, and see which way my arm moves.

I WAS immensely irritated by your letter. Entirely the wrong tone. This is because you wrote it before you received my last letter, which I wrote *after* meeting J.L. By the time you read *this* letter, presumably, you'll have got the last one, and you'll have realized what a solecism you have committed. You'll have seen for yourself that we are no longer in the realms of *social comedy*. We are shaken by the winds of Heaven. I have reached a *major crisis* in my life, and I have no one but you to turn to for comfort and advice. Facetiousness and flippancy are behind us. They belong to a youth that has suddenly expired.

I'm sorry. It's not your fault. It's the Paleolithic slowness of aircraft between England and Australia.

The fearful truth is that I am in love. Possibly. Or possibly not. I am in *something*. Some state of distraction, anguish, irritation, regret, daydreaming, longing. I can't stop thinking about her. Well, obviously not—I've had classes to give on T.B.A.D., and essays on her to set, and a paper on her to write for some drivelling publication in Arkansas. I'm going to have to read twenty or thirty answers in examination scripts which misconstrue the plots of her novels and regurgitate some half-digested version of my own views on her—views that I see now were crass and immature, at once too high-handed and too respectful. How could I possibly stop thinking about her when she's my life's work? When I've only just met her and then lost her again before I could say any of the things I wanted to say, ask any of the questions

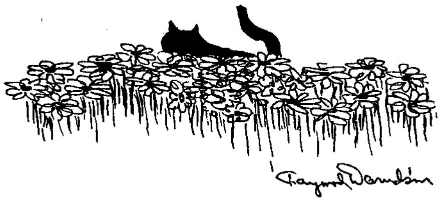
I have spent the last twelve years waiting to ask?

Because lost her I have. I sent her flowers the very next day—did I tell you in my letter? Oh, you haven't got it yet. No, by now you have, we decided. What's happening to me? I can't remember anything (except her) from one moment to the next. I'm losing track of time—all the logical pins are falling out. Yes, I sent her flowers—twenty-five pounds' worth, not including the charge for phoning them, which is a lot of flowers. They should have got there before she did. By the time she arrived home the front doorstep should have looked like an altar. No name on the bouquet, no message—just this huge, wordlessly eloquent gesture. Or so I thought. Perhaps I should have put a name on them. Perhaps she simply couldn't guess who they were from. Because there was no reply. Not that I was expecting one, not that I was even hoping for one. All the same, I couldn't help noting that there *wasn't* one. Nothing. I also wrote a letter. Of course—one always writes to thank visiting lecturers. So I wrote to thank, but in the most intimate and personal way. Then I rewrote the letter without the intimate and personal touches. Then I rewrote it again with a few sly allusions and innuendos. Then I cut out the allusions and innuendos. Then I tore it up altogether.

I was reduced to ringing. Got the answering machine. Her voice—but insultingly impersonal, shamingly stilted. She was not able to take my call just then, said this dreadful voice. Would I please leave a message. How could I leave a message? What message? I didn't know what I wanted to say! I was counting on some inspiration coming to me when I found myself in her presence—some new suddenly remembered whiskey bottle on the dressing table. Your unconscious won't speak after the beep! I rang again. And again. I rang late; I rang early. She was not able to take my call just then. Or just then, or just then, or just then.

I know what she was doing. She was working. "Do you work every day, or only when you're in the mood?" some idiot in my class had asked her, and she'd said something about always being able to work, no matter what. So that's what she was doing, quietly working while I failed to work. She was calmly scratching away with the Waterman, as if nothing had happened, as if I didn't exist. I was thinking about her, talking about her, hearing about her, and she was writing about someone else altogether. Some mere fiction.

But could she be working at ten o'clock at night as well as at ten o'clock in the morning? Some other beanbrain in the class had asked her whether she was a morning person or a night person, and I thought it was such a fatuous question that I didn't bother to listen to the answer. The opportunities I wasted! What did I think I was doing that day? I met her at the station off the eighteen-nine, arriving eight minutes late, which is eighteen-seventeen, and I left her in the guest room at six-twenty-three. That's twelve hours six minutes, and at least seven hours of that I had wasted either sleeping or listening to other people make banal conversation to her—and apparently not even listening to the answers.



Hold on, you say. You have some faint notion that you have found a clue to the mystery. You suddenly see yourself as one of those tedious bumbling characters in an old-fashioned detec-

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READING ON THE BEACH

What time is it? Raphael, says Vasari,
"showed himself sweet and pleasant . . ."
In the big Caribbean day, on the small
foxed page, those hours of paint and gold
are here. The boy is a detail: this morning
Raphael commences the boy holding a scroll.

Compulsively the Caribbean's rim
collapses over the rumpled sand: fall,
steal, hush; tide punctual in a blue
overlaid by violet; tide on time
as the machine in the chest counts and counts.
The boy Raphael imagined does not breathe.

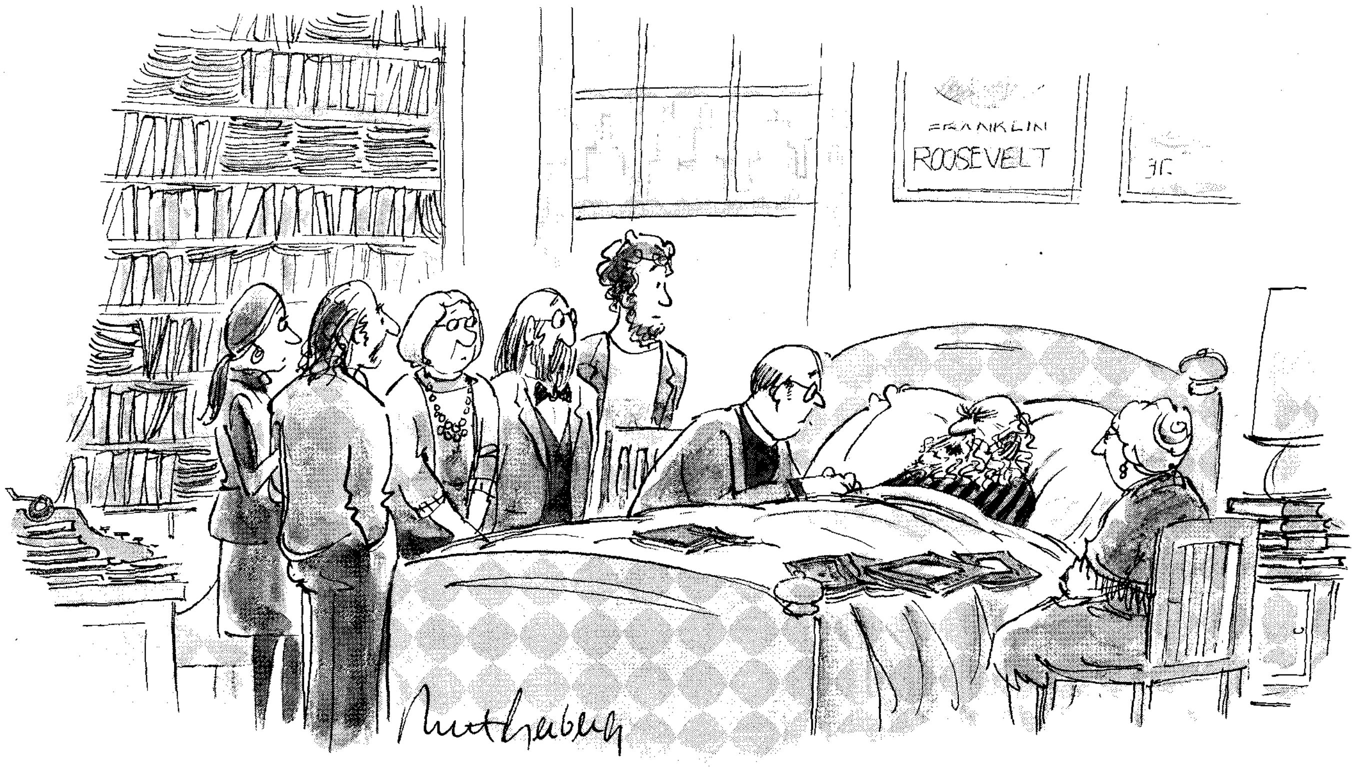
This is *now*. *Then* can mean Raphael,
or future, as "perhaps then we shall . . ."
The Chimera was steadfast, compared with time's
aspects. Its undependability
is legendary: the prisoner's monster,
the saint's cipher. Perhaps does not exist.

Raphael Sanzio of Urbino was
"as excellent as gracious," Vasari says,
"with a natural modesty and goodness." (He says, too,
"Most artists have hitherto displayed something
of folly and savagery.") For a detail on the high
altar of Aracoeli, Raphael did a boy with a scroll

looking up at the Virgin. "For his beautiful
face and well-proportioned limbs he cannot
be surpassed." What of the boy, and the foam's
semicircle that slides and winks? Time
in some sort of weather took Vasari's hand.

Raphael's boy stares the centuries down
as Raphael's hand though dust is manifest.
Sea goes too far back to imagine,
forward too far even for Raphael's boy.
On its edge is the boy of Raphael's hand.
On Vasari's foxed page my hand is warm.

—JOSEPHINE JACOBSEN



"Just two confessions. I sometimes harbored admiration for Richard Nixon, and I never found the Marx Brothers funny."

• •

tive story who turn out at the end to have solved the problem. Left her in the guest room, you query with deceptive mildness, at six-twenty-three?

Yes! What's odd about that? She was asleep. I didn't want to wake her up. All right? I needed to get back, have a shower, be ready for my first class. When was my first class? Not until eleven. As it happened. But I had to change my clothes, do this and that. Do what and what? Well, just possibly get an hour's sleep. Then perhaps get another hour's sleep. That's why I was awake at six. Because it was a single bed and I'd been lying on the edge of it. All night. She'd been in the middle of it, fast asleep, and somewhere around five o'clock, as I balanced, wide awake, along the six-inch ledge that remained along the right-hand side, with my knees and arms projecting over the abyss, I began to feel an enormous resentment. It seemed to me that there was a mocking parallel between our positions on the bed and our positions in life. There she was, comfortably ensconced in the soft center of English letters, not even aware that there were others clinging painfully to their outer edges.

I see some slight surprise on your face. Didn't I say I was in love with this woman, you ask. No, I didn't say I was in love with her, as a matter of fact. This is less than scholarly of you. Go back to the text. What I said was that I didn't *know* whether I was in love with her. I was in something with her, I declared. But what that something was had yet to be established. Possibly just a temper. Anyway, resentment wasn't the only thing I was feeling on the edge of that bed. I was also feeling tenderness and awe and a tremendous awareness of the soft pressure of her body all the way down my back. Also I was thinking about breakfast.

—What sort of breakfast, you query idly. Orange juice? Eggs and bacon?

I don't mean like that. Well, poached eggs, perhaps, a little. Poached eggs and coffee. I had expended a fair amount of energy, after all. But the aspect of breakfast I was thinking mostly about was the sight of my colleagues' faces. I mean, as they raised their eyes from the *Sun* and *Private Eye* and saw me walking in. With her. All right, all right, not a very gallant anxiety, I see that—but I had to live with these people. To have broken a divine prohibition so solemn that no one had even known it existed was shattering enough, but to have the entire senior common room *know* that I had might be more than I was strong enough to bear. And just think about this: I'm coming up for renewal this autumn. And don't say, "But everyone saw you buying those Durex Fetherlites." That was all rubbish. No one saw me buying any Durex Fetherlites, because I didn't buy any. They don't *have* Durex Fetherlites in the machine in the Students' Union. (I've been saving that crushing little rejoinder up for a rainy day, and a rainy day it now is.)

—Be that as it may, you walked out and left her breakfastless?

Certainly not. I wrote out the most precise instructions how to find the breakfast room, and left them on the bedside table.

—You amaze me. You are obviously much better organized now than you were in the old days. You actually had paper with you to write on?

In fact, not. But that didn't stop me from improvising.

—What did you improvise with?

The back of a check. Yes, yes—I

can see that a check is not the most tactful thing to leave by a lady's bedside in the morning. But it was either that or nothing. Either that or no breakfast. Anyway, I scribbled out the print on the front. Technically it wasn't a check anymore.

—Did you write "Cancelled" across it?

Certainly not. Well, yes, I think I did. To be on the safe side. In case it fell into the wrong hands. Look, it's very easy for you to criticize, after the event, sitting down there in the safety of the Southern Hemisphere. If you had seen what I wrote on the back of that former check I don't think you would have found it lacking in tact or feeling. I not only drew a map showing the way to the breakfast room—I even told her which urn the hot milk was in and how to work the toaster. I said I'd collect her in time to escort her to the station for the nine-thirty-seven back to London. And before you ask—no, I didn't collect her. Because when I got back to my room I lay down for the brief sleep I needed so as to ready myself for the day's labors, and didn't wake up until ten to eleven. When I reached the guest room after my class I was not all that surprised to find that she'd gone. I didn't attach much importance to this at the time—may even have been, in the dark depths of my heart, a little relieved. I sent off the flowers. (Twenty-five pounds' worth, did I say? Not including the cost of phoning them.) Then I went singing to work, wrote that long letter to you (with a lingering flippancy that I regret more and more from one moment to the next), and that night went merrily to bed. Then, somewhere around two o'clock, I woke up—and everything was gone. All the merriment, all the snugness and sweetness. My peace of mind. My career. Possibly my sanity. This was when I got up to write the first version of the thank-you letter.

What am I going to do? I can't go chasing off to London. I can't just turn up on her doorstep. For her it was plainly a mere passing adventure and it's over. I see that. I accept that.

But what's making me want to howl at the moon is the thought of her scratching away down there in London as if nothing had happened. I'd just like to know that she had lifted her head from her imaginary world for one moment, and said . . .

THE WINDOW

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Another thought has just occurred to me, though. She may not be scratching away as if nothing had happened. She may be putting down some version of the events in the guest room. One of her maddeningly percipient odd crabwise heroines may be scuttering bizarrely sideways at the sight of some bumptious young academic's aubergine underpants. No need for one of your looks, thank you—I have managed to grasp the irony of this unprompted. It's different, though—she's not writing privately to a friend of hers in some comfortingly remote country. She's writing to friends of *mine*. And enemies of mine. And colleagues of mine. And students of mine. . . .

What? *Are* my underpants aubergine? Of course they're not aubergine! Don't you know anything about my taste at all? But she may be *saying* they're aubergine! That's what they do, these people. They embroider, they improve on the truth—they tell lies.

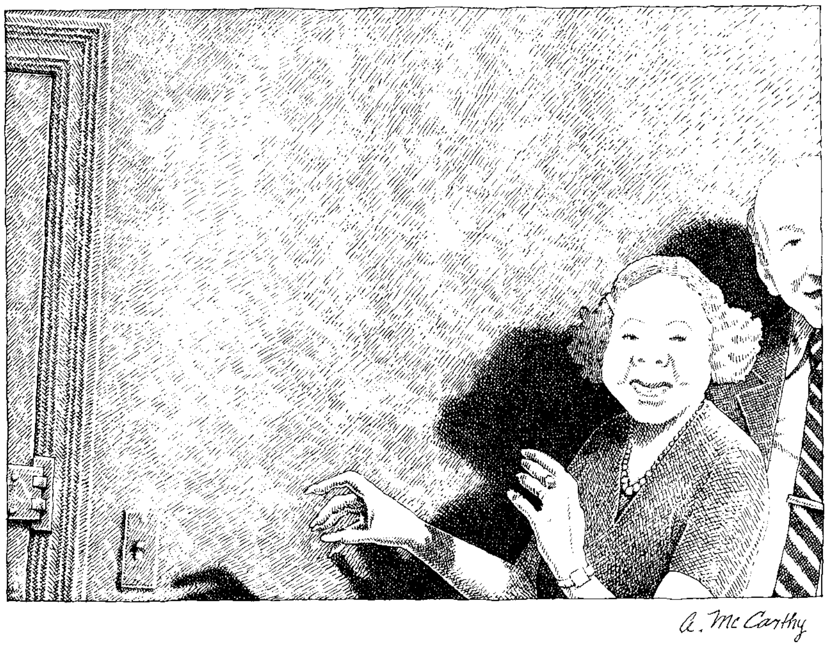
I'm sorry. I'm overreacting. I know perfectly well that it takes years for events to percolate down into these people's unconscious. That in the process the identifying details get transformed beyond all recognition. That in any case *her* characters don't have comical adventures of the sort that she herself evidently has, and that if and when the episode ever does surface it will have been transmuted into some weird anguish involving flames and clairvoyant nightjars—will have become yet another station of the cross on some brave barmy woman's calvary.

I ought to be humbly grateful to be made use of. This is a privilege granted to few of us commentators.

Also I ought not to have reacted in the way that I did to the prospect of the mismatched underwear. I see now that this reflects more on me than on her. You may think you detect, when the letter arrives and you come to read the passage concerned, a certain transferred sexual hysteria. If I could go back and correct the text, as you can and no doubt have been doing for the past seven years with your book on Mörike, I should remove all reference to it. Please bear in mind the unscholarly and exposed position I am putting myself in by sending off each episode of this story as it occurs, before its lessons have been learned and its proper place in the whole assessed.

I can see already, for instance, even before this installment leaves my hands, that I ought to have stayed and escorted her into breakfast. You were right. I was wrong.

Oh, what's going to become of me in this life? I've been washed up on the beach and forgotten about. Nothing's happening in the world! Or if it is it's happening somewhere else. In Melbourne, perhaps. In London. Certainly



THE DOOR

not here. I see it now—I'm going to spend the rest of my life in this dreadful place. I'm going to die here.

I'm not going chasing up to London, though. I'll just lay my poor sad head down on my desk and . . .

I broke off there because I heard the postman.

And on the mat, when I got there, was a piece of thin cardboard, approximately fifteen centimetres by ten.

On the front: "Portrait of a Man Holding His Gloves," by Jan Gossaert, 1470-1533, Busch-Reisinger Museum.

On the back the autograph inscription: "Beautiful flowers! How sweet of you. J.L."

I am coming round to the view, as I study this document, that Jan Gossaert, 1470-1533, may be the greatest painter since Giotto.

And I ask you—can that woman write, or can she write?

There's a train at two-fifty-seven.

I HATE London.

I hate all that wealth. I hate the way the money keeps leaking out of the rich bits and seeping into the poor bits, like some oozing radioactive effluent, and poisoning them. I hate not knowing where the contagion's got to now.

I hate people realizing I'm just there for the day. I hate other people who are just there for the day. I hate not being sure whether they are or whether they aren't.

I hate the Dickens bits. I hate the Virginia Woolf bits.

I hate the weather. All that smart metropolitan hotness. All that savage metropolitan wetness. It was the wetness that got me this time. Blue skies and great rolling white clouds as the train came in through the suburbs, so I checked my umbrella in with my overnight bag in Left Luggage. I obviously couldn't arrive on her doorstep with the bag, as if I'd come to stay. I had to be just looking in, on my way from somewhere in London to somewhere else. And I obviously didn't want to arrive with an umbrella on my arm, looking like some cautious provincial academic who'd been forced to equip himself for all the day's possibilities hours earlier in some entirely different weather zone, when everyone in London knew there was some up-to-the-minute metropolitan dryness in the air. But when I came out of the Tube, that bitch of a city had had some amusingly sophisticated change of heart. The sky was bleak, and an ominous wind was groping around inside my jacket and feeling up my trouser leg. And, sure enough, by the time I had gone far enough to get lost it had started to rain.

It was one of those bits of London where with any luck you could get mugged by Rastas and vomited over by security brokers within the same block. Poor people desperate to be rich were all mixed up with rich people desperate to be poor, and the strangest anomaly on the streets was undoubtedly an academic desperate to remain an academic. Particularly an academic without an umbrella. The rain lost all normal civilized restraint. It hurled itself down on me with a terrible impersonal metropolitan violence. My nerve broke. I ran. So that by the time I had found the right front door I was not only soaked but out of breath.

She took some moments to recognize me. She stood holding the door open with one hand, holding a mug in the other with a plate balanced on top of it, caught between floors, probably, on her way from somewhere to somewhere else. She gazed at me, waiting for me to explain myself. I stood gazing back at her, not explaining myself. Why not, you ask. Because it took me some moments to recognize *her*. The last time I had seen her fully dressed—the *only* time—she had been wearing—I don't know—something kind of dark blue (you know how sensitive I am to colors). Something rather soft and neat, with a touch of worldliness at her throat. But now I was face to face with something in brown. A brown cardigan done up over a maroon dress over a pair of men's gray trousers over a pair of furry red slippers that some aunt had given her for Christmas. No worldliness, no neatness. Just a pair of joke half-moon spectacles sliding down her nose. And a mug of tea, with a plate on top of it. And on the plate a slice of bread and Marmite with a tomato next to it.

I hated that tomato. It looked to me like a London tomato.

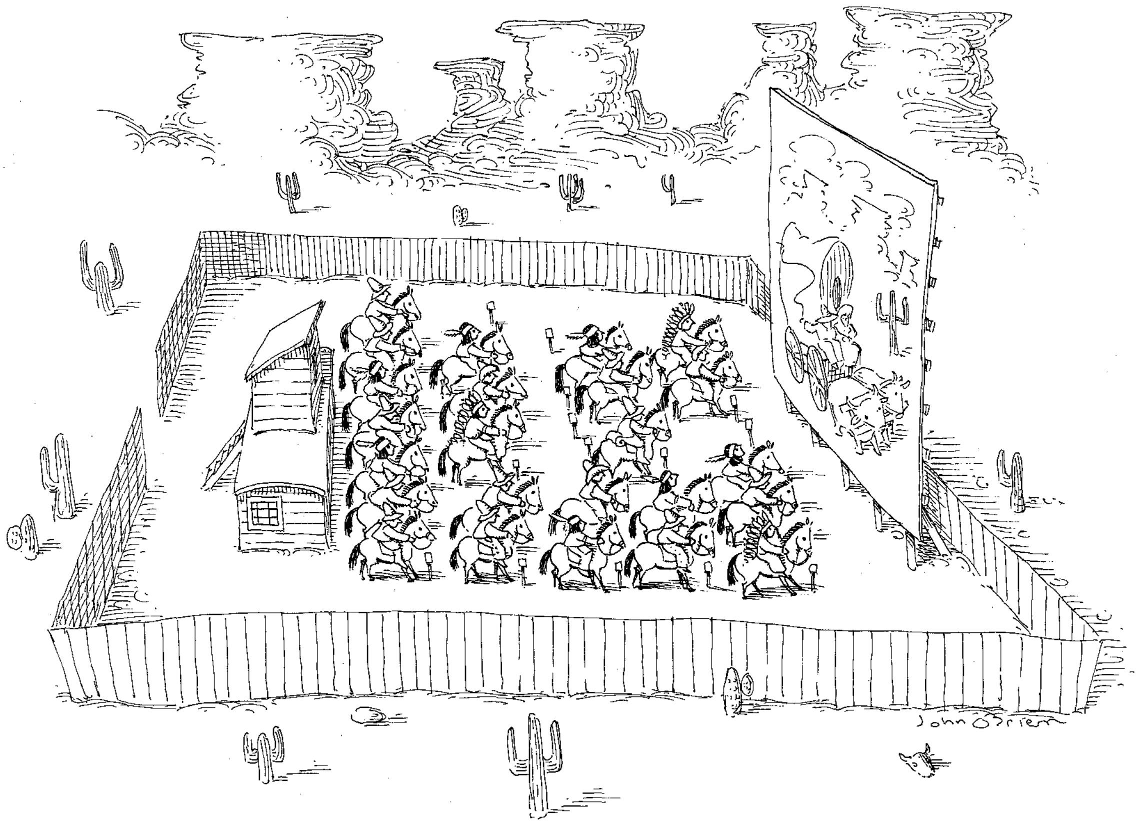
I say it took me some moments to recognize her. That's not so. I knew it was her all right—knew at once from that deep unblinking gaze above the glasses. I was just taken aback for a moment (once again!) to find it located in this dreadful bundle of old castoffs.

"Oh," she said.

"I was in town," I said.

"Yes," she replied.

We stood facing each other, waiting for something to happen. A difficult moment at the best of times, in my experience, the second meeting. But this was a tougher test than most. The wet trousers clung piteously around my knees like tearful supplicants. The terrible tomato rolled portentously around her plate like an oversized roulette ball that has still not made up its mind



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which of the players to favor. I knew what had happened. She had been working in some upstairs room. She had come downstairs to the kitchen for five minutes to get herself something to eat as she worked, and then before she could get back up the stairs—Porlock.

"Well," she said.

"Anyway," I replied.

I believe I told you in an earlier letter how much we had to say to each other. But we could get on equally well, I now discovered, without words. In fact, after this opening conversation we were happy to stand for an hour or two in absolute silence. Then she moved to one side and gestured silently with the mug of tea for me to enter. The gesture dislodged the tomato, and it fell off the plate and rolled away across the hall. Even before I was properly through the door I was making haste to help about the house, as a guest should, by bending to retrieve it. She, like a good hostess, rushed to forestall me, so that I caught the mug and balanced plate with my shoulder. The tea went mostly over the wallpaper. The bread and Marmite fell onto the floor. Marmite side down, of course. I hadn't just stopped her working. I had even stopped her eating and drinking. On the other hand, what a wealth of material I was giving her if ever, many years from now, when all this emotion is recollected in tranquillity, she attempts a comic novel.

Of course, as I stood in her kitchen drinking another mugful of the tea I kept saying I was going to leave, but I could scarcely leave wearing nothing but a flowered pink dressing gown, as I was by then. (My sensitivity to color yet again!) I kept urging her to go back to work, but she could scarcely leave me in charge of a strange dryer, with my shirt rumbling round inside it, or until the iron had warmed up sufficiently for her to iron my jacket and trousers. I didn't stand there in her dressing gown doing nothing at all, of course. I wrung out a cloth, and went back upstairs to the entrance hall, while she called after me, "What are you doing? Leave it, leave it!," and I wiped the Marmite off the floor and onto the wallpaper. I opened all the kitchen cupboards hopelessly, looking for more bread and more Marmite, and something to cut the bread on, and something to spread the Marmite with, while she cried, "Leave it! *Please* leave it!" What else could I do? I couldn't go upstairs and write her book for her.

By this time, in any case, these events had got caught up and swept away in the general downtumble of events at large. She had to break off ironing my trousers as her kitchen was invaded by a huge confusion of very tall, lethargic young men, who all had names like Emmett and Tawney, and who turned out to be her two sons. I had seen the formula "2s." in her entry in the reference books, of course, and never taken very much notice of it. In small print, in the preliminaries to a long paragraph of titles and prizes and honorary doctorates, "2s." is a neat little formulation, but in a small kitchen 2s. bulk much larger than honorary doctorates or memberships in professional bodies. Very soon the room was completely full of them, draped hugely over counters, sprawling in chairs, eating, belching, complaining, fighting, asking for things, holding up the work on my trousers, and rather conspicuously ignoring me, except to keep on requiring access to whichever small corner I happened to have taken refuge in.

Then things got worse. The room was suddenly, mysteriously even fuller. Perched on the edge of the table was a rather sordid man. I mean, *really* rather sordid, with gray hair, and a bit of a belly, and some kind of dreadful suède jacket. But I mean *curly* gray hair, and a shirt open down to here, and white socks, and battered soft shoes with little meaningless gold chains on them. Talking to her and looking at me at the same time, and swinging this terrible white-socked leg back and forth. Just suddenly *there*, on the edge of the table, swinging his leg, with no explanation of how he'd got there and no one taking any notice now he was. Talking to her, as she ironed my trousers, about various sums of money, and looking smilingly at me in my pink dressing gown. And called something frightful, like Bill, or Ben, when she got round to explaining me to him (she didn't explain *him* to *me*). And straight from some book fair, with his inside

Slow road to glory

The Story of the Lands' End Rugby Shirt

by Red Mulcahy

We had high hopes for our original Rugby Shirt when we introduced it in 1980.

After all, it was heavyweight cotton. Not a bit flimsy. And darn good-looking too, with its jaunty stripes. (We called 'em Team Stripes, which we thought had a real ring of authenticity.)

So we mailed out our catalogs, and waited for the applause.

Setback Number One.

What we got was more like a sustained Bronx cheer. Our customers complained that our rugby shirts shrank too much. Up to 20%. Went in the dryer a Large, came out a Medium.

We were embarrassed. Took the shirts out of our catalog, and even wondered whether we should leave rugby shirts to the sporting goods companies.

But our feisty nature got the best of us. We went back to the drawing board and developed a preshrunk 100% cotton jersey fabric. A beefy fabric, 10.5 oz. versus the usual 5 to 9 oz. A fabric that reduced shrinkage to a tolerable 3%.

So far, so good. But we wanted to be sure our improved shirts were the real thing. Especially since about this time, lots of "rugby shirts" were appearing on the market that were really nothing more than colorful sportshirts.

We figured a "field test" was in order. And gave our shirts to the University of Chicago rugby team. (They happened to be close at hand.)

Setbacks Number Two and Three.

The results were disastrous. While our new fabric stood up, almost nothing else did. A particular problem was the two-piece placket, which the ruggers consistently tore asunder.

Again, we went back to the drawing board, and developed a more rugged continuous placket—all one piece, with no weak point.

Would this make our shirt tough enough for rugby? We decided to submit our latest shirts to the ultimate test—international rugby—giving them to the USA Eagles, America's national team. The biggest, toughest rugby players in the country. (Some of these guys were born with five o'clock shadow.)

OUR SHIRTS FAILED AGAIN! Seams came apart. Buttons popped off. In a Hong Kong match, one Eagle came off the field wearing nothing above the waist but a collar.

We went (no, we trudged) back to the drawing board. But this time, we had the help of the Eagles. We switched to stronger thread. Developed deeper biting seams. Beefed up our shirt at collar, placket. And added other indomitable (we hoped) features.

The Eagles took our shirts into action in June 1984 against Canada. And we held our breath.

1
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4

At long last: "Tough as the game!"

To our relief, these Lands' End Rugby Shirts finally stood up to all the bruising, tugging, grabbing, tackling punishment the Eagles could put them through, in some of the toughest international competition imaginable.

And have continued to stand up, year after year. In 1987, they even survived three tough matches at the Rugby World Cup in Australia.

Now, that makes us pretty proud. Especially considering where these shirts came from.

Just shows what hard work (and a little humiliation) can do.

A Postscript...

If you'd like to put our "tough as the game" Rugby Shirt (or any of our other clothing and soft luggage) to your own "field test," write or call today for a free Lands' End catalog.

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pocket full of twenty-pound notes. A secondhand-book dealer, in fact. Which is of course what Mr. M., her former husband, had been. Funny, isn't it? And sordid. Furry slippers, and a dress over her trousers—and underneath this decent high-minded exterior a gross taste for men with a stack of used banknotes in their pocket and their feet in white socks.

I would have left as soon as I'd got my dry clothes back if it hadn't been for this gentleman's arrival. But as I padded upstairs with the clothes over my arm, and looked into rooms, trying to find somewhere to change, a bloody-minded mood came over me (and you know how bloody-minded I can be). So when I went downstairs, and discovered the 2s. gone, and the used-book salesman sitting at the table, with his shameful socks concealed beneath it, and a glass of wine in front of him, I sat down at the table, too. "I'm damned if I'll go!" I thought. I was greatly strengthened by being back inside my trousers, of course. I felt like Samson after a visit to a good trichologist.

J.L. poured me a glass of wine as well, after a slight but wounding pause, then left us sitting there while she cleared up the devastation left by the army of sons. Used Books smiled at his glass, and waited for me to leave. I scowled at mine, and waited for him to leave. "So," he said, "what's going on in the world of Eng. Lit.?" "Not a lot," I whipped back. We sat and listened to the quiet, dull song of scourer on frying pan. "Well," he said, "I thought it suited you." "What?" I flung back. "The dressing gown," he said. I was in no hurry to reply to this, but after a while I took a match out of the box that happened to be lying on the table and lit it. I watched it burn down to my fingertips. It took fifteen seconds, you will be interested to hear. I put the blackened corpse of the match down on the table. Then I took out another and did the same to that. Then a third, and a fourth. Some of them expired in thirteen or fourteen seconds. One of them I managed to keep going for sixteen. It was a large box, and the average contents, according to the label, were 300 matches. I believe I wanted to make it clear that I was prepared to sit there and burn each one down to the end. "Is it a long journey back to wherever it is?" asked Dirty Books solicitously (one look at his feet and you knew his speciality was eighteenth-century erotica). I didn't reply. J.L. looked at me. I shrugged, and took another match out of the box. They both watched as I slowly, methodically burned it to death. Books leaned his elbow on the table, and arranged his head on his hand so that he couldn't see me or my matches. He made a little conversation to J.L. about what X had said Y's relations were to Z, where X, Y, and Z were unknown quantities to me. But J.L. didn't respond; she was watching the slow cremation of her matches. As each match flared up it lit an answering spark in the depths of her eyes. After about the thirty-third match I realized her curly-haired friend had given up talking. He was watching as well. It was as irresistible as television. I began to feel like the producer of one of those series that everyone talks about in the senior common room. London had a certain charm after all, I realized. After the forty-seventh match my opponent sighed and scratched his head. "Well," he said, and got to his feet.

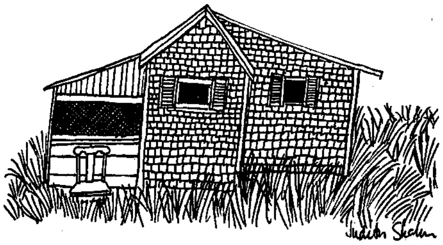
Game.

As she saw him out I cleared away the burned matches. I washed out the bookseller's glass, refilled it with wine, and put it on the table in front of the chair J.L. had been sitting in. Don't think I was making any assumptions, just because I'd outsat some greasy libertine in a suède jacket. It was the possibility of a divan in the living room that I was considering, that's all. It was going without breakfast, and shaving in the lavatory on the early train.

She came back into the kitchen and looked at her watch. "I'm going back to work," she said. "Let yourself out, will you?"

And back to work she went.

I couldn't believe it. I thought I'd stopped her working! I thought I'd destroyed her entire working day! What a waste of evil! All my boorishness—all my guilt—all the rich sense of irony I had felt at drying up the source of my own raw material—it had all gone for nothing! Which is why this letter comes to you on the back of someone else's typescript. No other paper with me—no more trains tonight—nothing else to do all evening in this dreadful little hotel with nylon sheets and no television.



Writing on the back of things again! I suppose that's what my entire life consists in. If it's not checks or discarded typescripts, it's other people's books, other people's imaginations, other people's lives. Actually, you may find the stuff on the other side of these particular pages more interesting than my hopeless adventures in Hell-on-Thames. It's part of a report on the running of Human Disciplines that we commissioned from some half-wit firm of management consultants. It's quite funny. Well, it made me laugh when I read it on the train. But that was yesterday.

THANKS for your letter. Sorry about the weekend in Adelaide. And the cockatoo. Glad about your new lady friend. Daniela, yes. The name alone would launch a ship or two. *Plus* lithe Thai thighs. Sounds like a new Oriental religion. And post-grad French Lit.—that'll make a change from the last one.

Sorry about your mother. Mine's on the blink, too. Knee, this time.

Nothing else happening here. Oh, Gordon has got Bradford. The chair. Gordon Wiley. I suppose you don't know him. Was at U.E.A. after Norman. Bit of a tit.

What else? Computer's got the curse again. The whole department's having its monthlies.

The weather's rotten.

That's about it, I think.

DID I?

Sound depressed, I mean. Yes, well, I suppose I was. Can't remember, to tell you the truth. Forgotten when I wrote. It all just disappears as soon as it's happened. Don't you find?

Not even sure what I'm feeling now. Something. Something dull. Might be depression. Who knows?

Well. That's the way it goes. The weather, I expect. Also the usual business of where am I going, what am I doing? Et cetera et cetera. Et cetera et cetera et cetera.

Read too many books, probably. Took the work too seriously. Conscientious little bugger, me. Always was. Natural swot. Think I'll cruise for a bit now. Plan my sabbatical.

My mother's back in hospital. Other knee.

AMAZING developments!

I hadn't rung the doorbell—hadn't even got to the front step—when the door's flung open and she comes running out, grabs me by the arm, and drags me inside. Speechlessly. Not a sound. No words of recognition—no explanation—nothing. Grab! In here! Me: "Sorry, I just happened to be—" Be what? Never discovered. Because there inside is this extraordinary sound. It's like some kind of car alarm—short bursts of enormous uncontrolled noise—but *animal*. It's coming from upstairs; and down the stairs, fleeing this terrible noise, is a *thing*, a huge and heavy something, falling crash, crash, crash from stair to stair, turning over and over as it comes, and throwing off bits like a Catherine wheel. It stops in the hall in front of me, and it's a *typewriter*, an upside-down I.B.M. electric *typewriter*, trailing wires, and it lies as dead as a dead elephant in the middle of fallen hat-stands and spread-eagled books and crunching glass and anguished sons. I run up the stairs, don't think twice, terrified, brave as a lion, toward this terrible sound. And there at the top of the stairs—the animal! No—animals, plural! Four, six, three of them! Animals in clothes, animals with arms and legs! Dozens of limbs and heads and trousers, all mixed up, all over the place—fighting—a battle. A man—no hair—berserk. A woman—fat—mouth open—blood on her face. Two people, fighting. Man and woman. Stop them, part them! Man shouting, woman screaming. Man assaulting woman—I've got it worked out at last. My God—rape! *Stop him!*

"Hold it! Fuck off! Fuck off!" Me to him this, probably. Trying to push him back. Trying to get hold of his flailing raping arms.

"I'm the psychiatrist! I'm the fucking psychiatrist!" Him to me.

"Her! Her! Stop *her!* Get *her!*" From someone familiar on the stairs.

Scream—scream—scream. From the car alarm with the open mouth, who's throwing muddled handfuls of manuscript into the air, kicking up childish little snow flurries of manuscript—*scroosh*, *scroosh* . . .

Agh! Someone's bitten my hand. Kick his bloody ankle! Get your fuck-

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ing hands off me! Oh, it's you. . . . What the hell are you . . . ? My God! *Boobla-boobla-boobla-boom!* That's two hundred LPs making their separate ways down the stairs!

STOP! You to me, this, firmly but calmly. Stop, stop, stop. You want me to go right back to the beginning. Never mind what's coming down the stairs. You want me to explain how I came to be in her house in the first place.

I've told you. She came running out— Sorry? You mean, how did I just happen to be standing there in the street at the time, given that the whole episode with her was over, that there never had been an episode?

Well, now. In the first place, I wasn't standing in the street, I was walking along it. I was just going to ring her bell, on the off chance, in passing, just as anyone might, if they found themselves in the locality of some old acquaintance. Yes! I genuinely was in the neighborhood! How? Because I had to go up to London that Saturday for a rally. A *rally*. A union rally. Something political—you wouldn't understand. I know in the past I haven't always managed to do as much as I should to— Was the rally outside her house? No, of course it wasn't, but I had to go on from the rally to this other thing. That's right—I'd just reached her house, but I still hadn't rung the doorbell. What's odd about that? These things happen. They certainly do.

Where was I? Yes, "Götterdämmerung" and the Matthew Passion all over the stairs, and more people running up them—crunch, crunch, crunch. Red-haired woman with her hands raised imploringly. Two small children. . . . A barking dog. . . . Other people visible in doorways. Man with curly gray hair and suède jacket, *sitting*, hopelessly. It's all been going on forever.

You're holding your hand to your head again, I can see, very silently and patiently. You can't understand a word of this. No, well, I should think not. Nor can I—and I'm there in the middle of it all.

I'd never seen these people before! Well, the curly gray hair and suède jacket looked somehow familiar. Comfortingly familiar, I thought at the time, so I even misunderstood the bit I understood. I knew her, of course. Though I scarcely did, in fact, with her terror-stricken look in the middle of all this scream-shout-kick-pain-boombadoombla.

I can see you're looking very unmoved by all this down there in the placid State of Victoria, where the most violent thing that ever happens is probably the cans of peaches falling off the canned-peach trees. I'm not on the battlefield *now*, you object. I'm recollecting it in tranquillity, with the benefit of reflection. I'm reconstructing events. I must have done some historical research. There must have come a moment when the jealous wife or mistress—

The who?

—The fat lady. There must have come a moment when she had subsided into tears and accusations and exhaustion, and been got out of the house by the husband, or lover, or led away by friends, or her sister, or sedated by the psychiatrist . . .

If he *was* a psychiatrist. He didn't sound much like a psychiatrist to me.

—Yes, and when the alarmed neighbors and next-door children had departed . . .

This was only after someone had called the police, you realize!

—Nevertheless, there must have come a moment when you sat down quietly—

Yes. On the stairs. I had to move the remains of the answering machine to find a space.

—Exactly. You sat down on the stairs, and presumably began to try to piece together what had happened.

Piece together what had happened? You mean, *ask* her?

—That's often the way people find things out.

How could I ask her? She was in a state of shock. She was walking up and down the hall, trying not to step on things, and she was laughing shakily and crying, and she'd got her arm round one of her sons, and she kept saying "Sorry" to him. And the other son kept picking up records and reading out the labels aloud and putting them down again. And then the telephone rang in the living room, and she just picked it up and listened and put it down again without saying anything. And you want me to start *interrogating* her? Well, I daresay Vlad the Mad would have got out his tape recorder. Dr. Scoff might have made a few notes. But I didn't even think of it. I was in a state of shock myself.

It's a funny business, I agree. Here I was at the very heart of the literary process. A uniquely well qualified observer on hand at the beginning of creation. Because sooner or later she was going to have got all this arranged in her mind. Turned round backward and shifted sideways, with all the irrelevant participants, such as me, cut out of it, and all the others found names and faces and thoughts. There it would all be on paper. You'd know what everyone was doing and why they were doing it. You'd be able to hear what they were saying. You'd feel their pain and their humanity. And what would I emerge with, if I stuck to my trade? A page of incoherent jottings, which would be boiled down to make an awkward footnote in a memoir or a critical biography ("The author was present when events occurred that may possibly have suggested the scene under discussion here"), which would then be cut out at the request of her literary executors.

Still, that's the nature of the industry in which we work. I'm not complaining. I am acquiring certain insights, after all, even if they are incommunicable ones. Most people, probably, never see beyond the smiling, calm, confident public figure who came to be talked to by my students. What I saw today was a frightened helpless child, who had *gone too far*, and set the house on fire. I made her a cup of coffee. . . . I'm lying—I made her a cup of *Ovaltine*, because that was what she wanted—and this time there were no impatient cries of "Leave it!" as I hunted through the drawers and cupboards. She sat down in a little heap at the kitchen table with her head cradled in her hands, gazing down into the Ovaltine like an exhausted child. I watched her discreetly across the table. The smile had gone forever. That unblinking gaze was turned not on the souls of men but on some dark vision in the depths of the Ovaltine. She was no longer extraordinary, no longer ordinary. She was an ingenious hardworking woman who had improvised some kind of rough shelter against the night winds and then seen it swept away.

The sons had left by this time—they

had an important party to go to. (That's the difference between mere sons and someone who's teaching your books, you see.) I cleared a path up the stairs. I collected up all the manuscript. Couldn't help reading a sentence here and a sentence there as I did so, of course. It looked wonderful. There's a strange storm in it, when it rains gooseberries (cf. the second chapter of "Scatterbrain," only there it's cornflakes), and something about a woman going mad on the Northern Line, which I found particularly sympathetic. Looked for the inevitable bonfire, beacon, flamethrower, erupting volcano, or whatever, but couldn't find it. No sign of any bespectacled young academic falling about at the heroine's feet, either. Not that I was expecting it, of course (not for another year or two, at least), but you can't help being apprehensive.

I laid all the manuscript out in front of her on the kitchen floor so that she could sort it. But she just shook her head. So I hoisted her to her feet, put my arm round her shoulders, and led her upstairs through the path I'd cleared. I didn't consult her; she didn't raise any objections; we said nothing. I put her down on the edge of her modest double bed. Unlaced her terrible old gray tennis shoes. Pulled her terrible old blue sweater over her head. Unbuttoned her terrible old faded trousers and stood her up while I pulled them down around her knees. Sat her down again and shook them off her, twisting her left right left right left until they were free, while she sat gazing sombrely at her swaying knees. Then I lifted her feet onto the bed and tucked her up under the bedclothes. And all you can think of is what color underwear was she wearing this time? Well, to hell with your prurient curiosity. I'm not telling you. To tell the truth, I never even noticed. I wasn't looking at her like that. All I'm prepared to tell you is that she was wearing long navy-blue socks.

Still is, actually. Because, although it felt as if the day had gone on for a lifetime, it was only seven o'clock. So I gently shut the bedroom door and finished clearing the house. Put all the books back on the shelves in alphabetical order. Checked all the records one by one. Lined up damaged machines by the front door ready to go to the repairers. Hid all the irretrievably broken bits in black garbage bags. Found the vacuum cleaner, but put it back and used brush and carpet sweeper instead so as not to disturb her. Was an angel sent by God, in fact. Don't you wish you had some young pipsqueak studying *your* works?

Then I heated myself a couple of cannelloni in the microwave, and fetched a stack of her hundred-gram Conqueror bond out of her workroom. There being no other use I could think of putting my immense wakefulness to, I sat down at the kitchen table to write this dispatch. Now it's—my God!—after midnight. I'm going to put my head round her door to make sure she's all right, then I'm going to settle down on the divan in the living room. Not since Boswell met Johnson has genius been so perfectly served. More of this anon.

More of this right now. Came running all the way back to the kitchen to tell you. She's not asleep at all. She's sitting up in bed with a stack of the old hundred-gram, and she's *working*.

VERY briefly, then.

You say in your letter that the events of Bloody Saturday may not have been as unconnected with me as I was letting you suppose. You suggest, in your most owlish way, that they may have been in some way *set off* by my behavior the first time I called. I don't see how, but then I wouldn't, would I, because I don't see anything. But yes, you may be right. Perhaps they were. Perhaps my arrival was just one card too many on the house of cards. I jogged the table—I breathed out at the wrong moment. *He* said something to some other him, some other him spoke to some other her, some other her to yet another her . . .

Not the wife, you know, the human car alarm. Somebody else's wife altogether.

But yes, very probably. Who knows?

As I now see it with hindsight, the whole thing—and it *is* a thing—I suppose I haven't told you—it's a big thing, frighteningly big, the biggest ever for me, maybe for her, who knows?—this whole strange painful shimmering thing, as I now see it, is in a sense my creation. I wrote the first sentence, just as she might write the first sentence of a novel. I invited her to come and be talked to, and from that everything followed. Just as she might write at the start

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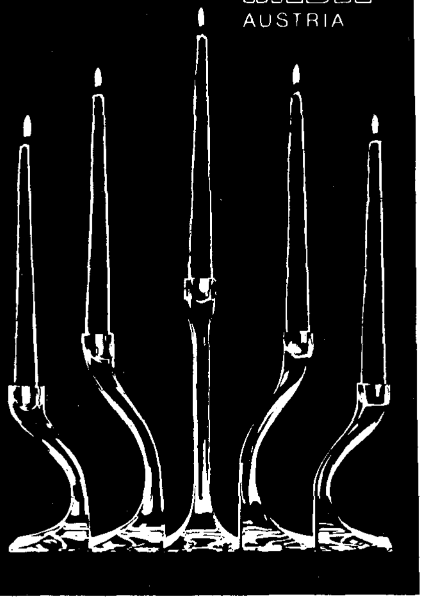

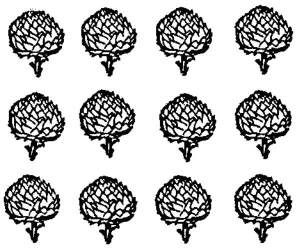

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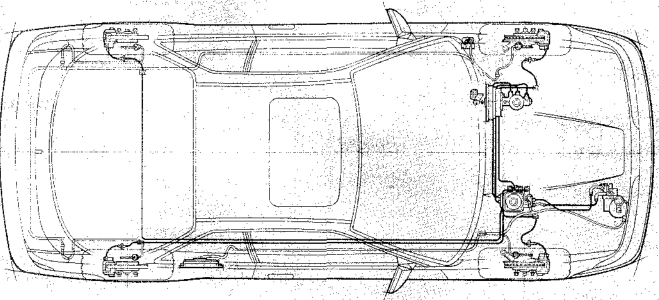

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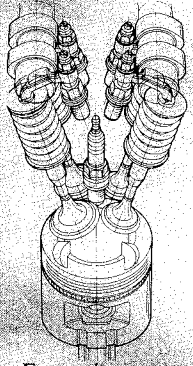

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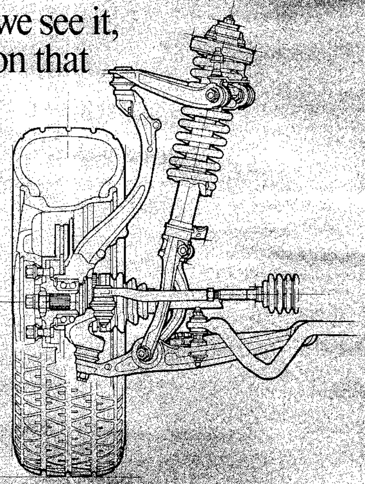

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of page 1 (indeed, did write, at the beginning of "The Sunday Runners"):

> The train stopped in a small gray town full of chapels and boarded-up warehouses. She could not see the name of the station. The only words visible were on small shops in the street outside. Fags 'n' Mags, said one of them. Cash in a Flash, said another. An old man in a ragged overcoat walked slowly down the street pushing a pram with a dog sitting in it. No one got out of the train, no one got in. Discouraged, it began to move out of the station. The old man in the ragged overcoat stopped to wipe the drip from the end of his nose on his long woollen scarf. "Here," she thought suddenly. She dragged her suitcase down from the rack, opened the door, and jumped down onto the slowly withdrawing platform. "Here is where I will start my life."

And from that one paragraph everything followed—the voices in the empty church, the death of the little Indian boy, the water snakes, the dance in the perfume factory (and isn't that just the best single bit in any of the books—just possibly in the whole of literature?).

Yes, I invited her. Out of nothing I made something. Out of the tangle of the world I plucked the one right string, and pulled, and lo, forth it all came, one strange event after another, like the water snakes, like the knotted silk handkerchiefs from the conjuror's fist, crimson and sky-blue and orange and heliotrope. This whole great *thing* is my tribute to her—it's me doing what she does. Not in ink but in breath and in skin; not on hundred-gram Conqueror bond but on Wednesdays and Fridays and Sundays and Wednesdays and on all these desperate trains to London. She's the unknown station I jumped out at.

She writes the train; I ride it.

I did her one quite practical good turn, though. I think. My gradual reconstruction of the events at the top of the stairs leads me to believe that I may have saved a lot of her manuscript from being torn up. I remember now (or so it seems to me) that at one point in the struggle I was wedged up against a hand holding a frustrated struggling slew of handwritten pages. I believe that it was only the enforced proximity of my left shoulder which stopped that hand joining forces with another vengeful hand somewhere on the other side of me to rip the pages into oblivion. What it was I saved, if I saved anything, I have no idea. But something, somewhere in her works, will owe its existence to me.

This may be the most important contribution I have ever made to my subject. Or ever will make.

But have I ever told you what she's *like*? I haven't, have I! What am I thinking of?

She's like vanilla-flavored cake. She's like a soft sharp cheese. She's like some kind of food you had when you were a very small child that you get the taste of on your tongue occasionally but that you can never identify or locate.

No, she's not. She's like a new school textbook in a dark-red cloth binding.

She's like one of those ordinary working days when the air's fresh and the sun comes and goes; when everyone in the streets is moving purposefully from place to place in the middle of the morning, and so are you.

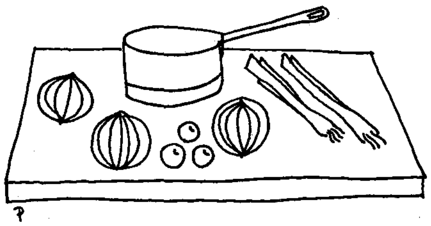
Do you think you can identify my assailant from that, Inspector?

All right—perhaps I should simply give you a complete physical description. I'll begin with her eyes, because that's the first thing you notice about her. Her eyes are like Indian groceries. That's to say, they're *open*. Very open. Open from early in the morning until late at night. You have to watch them for a very long time to catch them blinking. I sometimes sit on the opposite side of the kitchen table and watch them for thirty or forty minutes without seeing it happen. A blink in her eyes is as rare as a sea bream in the Sahara. Is it humanly possible to go that long without a blink? Perhaps she does blink—this astonishing thought is coming to me for the first time now as I write—and I don't see it because I'm blinking, too. Her blink is unconsciously triggered by mine, or mine by hers, so that we blink in perfect unison.

She's forty-four, you know. Quite matronly. Wears spectacles to read. Doesn't laugh—never laughs.

I'm thirty-two. Thin as a sheet of paper. Have to keep my spectacles on until my face is about sixty centimetres from hers. Enjoy an occasional laugh.

Another bulletin very soon, then, with a full update on the situation as it develops. PLUS academic gossip, film reviews, cookery tips, polite inquiries after you and your *copine* in French Lit.—Daniela?—and much, much more besides!



FIRST, an apology. I realize I haven't written for—well, however many months it is. So long, anyway, that your end of the correspondence has finally guttered out as well. But I think you'll understand how very fully occupied my waking hours have been when I tell you that I'm getting married.

Tomorrow.

In fact, this letter is by way of being my stag night. I've eaten a good absorbent chicken and rice in the faculty dining room to line my stomach, then come back to my room and set a large tumbler of straight malt on the desk beside me. May I ask you, before we go any further, to supply yourself with a similarly excessive amount of whatever you keep at the back of the cupboard for special occasions? I'll sip as I write, you'll sip as you read, and we'll both become a little lachrymose as we look back together upon the old glories, and forward to the uncertain splendors yet to come. We may even end up singing and smashing street lamps. Or reading lamps.

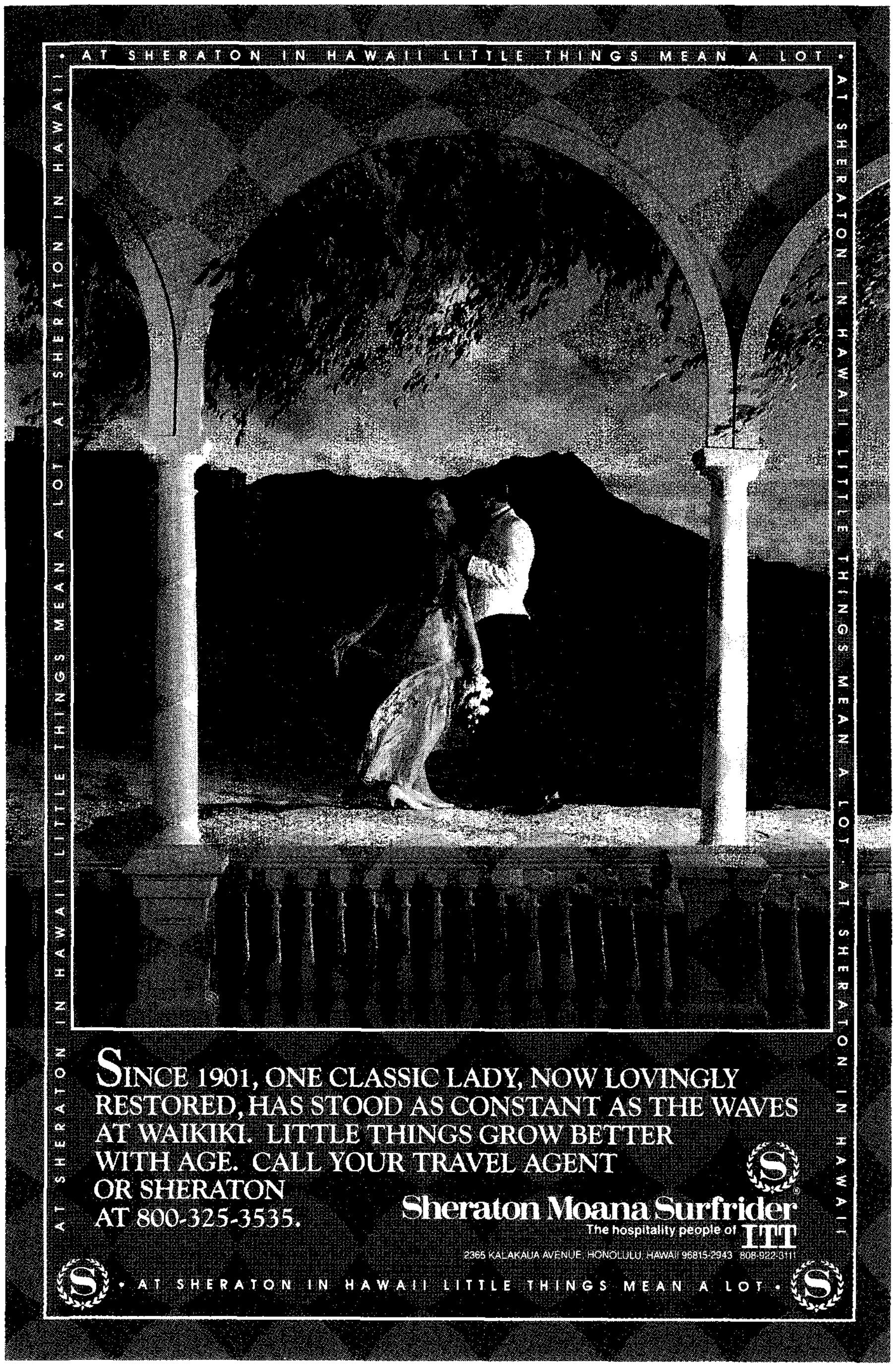
Actually, my regular badminton partner here, a dim good soul in Business Administration, very kindly offered to round up a few colleagues and take us all into town for an evening of ritual debauch, with a taxi ordered for afterward. I told him I had work to finish. One other stag, and him in Melbourne, is stag night enough for me. A quiet stag-to-stag is what I feel like. I realize that in the past I have not always revealed my deeper feelings. I'm changing, though. When you've had a moment to get over your initial shock at my announcement I shall talk to you rather seriously, in a way that you may find surprising, even embarrassing. But you won't be there to enjoy the public emotions of the ceremony tomorrow, so you'll just have to have a private preview of them tonight.

You will be most sorely missed tomorrow, incidentally. It's at her local registry office, with no one but us and her sons, plus her agent and sister as witnesses, and not a soul on the bridegroom's side of the nave except possibly my mother, *if* she can get up the steps. There's a small contingent from the department (organized by the Beldam, of course, not me) travelling down to the reception afterward, which we're giving in a restaurant we've heard good things about, especially from our good friend Ben, a rather crooked but amusing rare-book dealer, whose son runs it. Apart from them I shall be all alone.

Bridegroom. Reception. These are sonorous words. You're going to start wanting to know the composition of the bride's bouquet, and the color of her going-away dress. These details are still secret, from me at any rate, but I can exclusively reveal where the happy couple will be going for their honeymoon—straight back to the bride's house, in the case of the bride, who has a rather difficult chapter to finish, and straight back here for the bridegroom, who has an examiners' meeting. It's going to be a working honeymoon.

Bride. Yes. Another word that goes echoing away down the corridors of the mind. *My* bride. A double echo, like the key turning in some mighty lock. But this is what she has become. Because make no mistake—when I say bride I mean bride. And when I refer to her as my wife, which is what I shall be doing the next time I write to you, my wife is what I shall most solemnly mean. So, as you can see, I have changed. I don't have to tell you, of course, how seriously I have always taken her work. How seriously I have always taken its *seriousness*. This is what I admired in her from the first, and this is what I have come to love. The noble tradition to which we all once paid homage—the tradition of literature as a moral force—is alive and well and living in my bride, my wife-to-be. Not for a moment was she ever distracted from it by the fashions of the day. It is present in every mystery that she admits us to. Whereas I, even in my letters to you, have leaned a little toward the deconstructionist at times. My weakness for the light ludic touch may even have misled you about the strength of my feelings. I have been a comic novel. I see that now. I do hereby rewrite myself. I do most solemnly abjure my lightness, and strike my jesting words from the history of the world. I declare them unsaid.

I look back to the beginning of this letter and already even that seems to belong to the past. I see to my astonishment that I said *I* was getting married. What a strange way of putting it. There are two of us involved in this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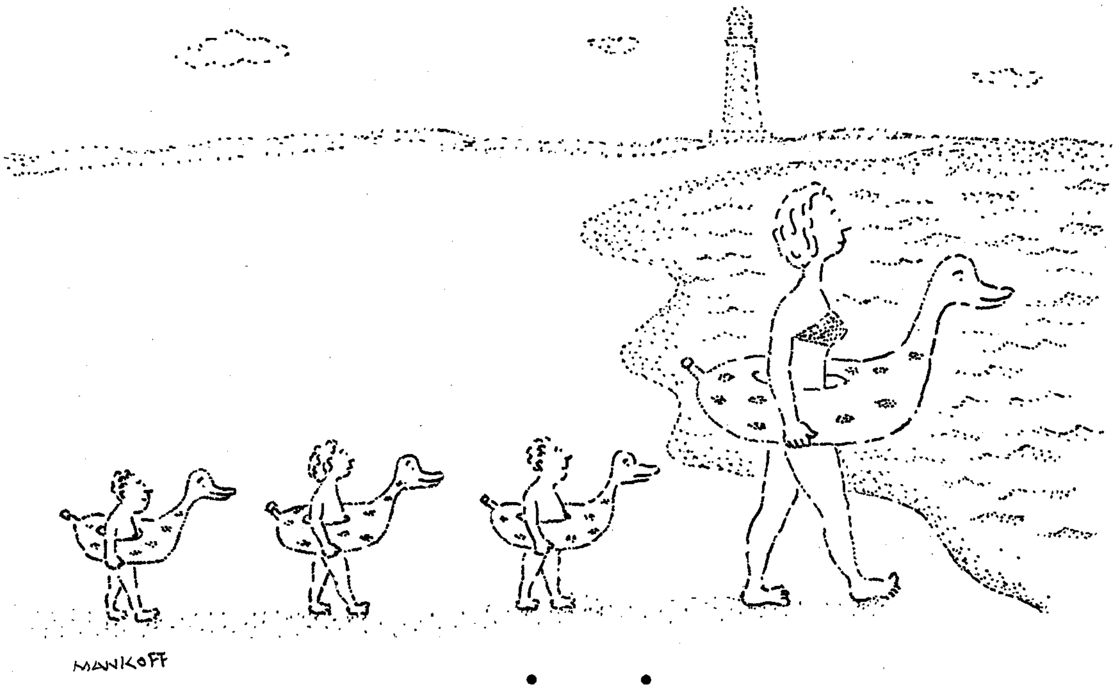

business, after all. *We* are getting married.

Our first truly corporate act will be to move. *I* should have been perfectly happy to shift my last few pairs of clean socks into her present house and inscribe myself on the local electoral roll. But I can't go on commuting from London, and she can write anywhere, so we have bought a house—*she* has bought a house—about fifteen minutes' drive from the campus. It's one of those leadenly suburban-looking houses you sometimes see dumped down in the middle of the countryside, as if they'd come on a day trip wearing unsuitable dormers and then got lost and sat down to rest their rose beds.

But don't think I'm not aware that she's the one who is making the sacrifice. London doesn't mean very much to me, but it does to her. How's she going to manage without her little Indian grocer's, or the office-supply shop in the High Street where she gets her paper, or the woman in the cleaner's who tells her who's up to what with whom? What's she going to do without her friends, and their muddled lives? And without her enemies? She needs enemies, you know. One does. We all do.

Why did she do it? Why did she say yes? Well, why, in the first place, did I ask her? No mystery about that. I wanted to ask. I had to ask her. I had to try it. I had to see whether she'd say yes. You can't stand still in life. Trees and rocks can stand still, but animate creatures have to keep moving. Stand still and you've only the rocks and trees for company. You've got to go forward. Don't you feel that? Forward, forward. I suppose that's why she said yes. Nothing much else in it for her that I can see.

I asked her in the Indian grocer's, incidentally. If you're interested in that sort of piquant detail. It was one of those muffled vague London Sunday mornings. She was standing in front of the refrigerator section, picking up tubs of cream and trying to read the dates on top, screwing up her eyes because she couldn't see without her glasses. I was carrying a wire basket with the papers and a loaf of bread and a box of eggs and a large pack of toilet rolls, and I opened my mouth to say something to her, I can't remember what—I think something slightly impatient about her slowness—and somehow the words changed in my mouth. It was the sad poor smell of the shop. I suddenly wanted to take her away from all those dubious pots of single and double cream, away from all these half-cocked bodged-up indeterminate Sundays. Away from her tiresome London. "I wonder if we should get married," I said. She looked at me. I looked at the packs of streaky bacon. Then she went on examining the tubs of cream. I thought she hadn't taken it seriously. I wasn't hurt. I didn't necessarily require a response. The words had got themselves said; that was the essence of the thing. Then, after we'd come out of the shop, as we were walking back to her house, she said, "I suppose the boys could live with their father for a bit."

Why do they do it? Any of them? What do they see in us?

Another glass? Why not. Don't have a stag night every night.

At least I shall be able to protect her privacy a little more closely in the country. She's at everyone's mercy in London. There's something about her writing that makes people want to invite her to meet them, or invite themselves to meet her. Complete strangers turn up on her doorstep and expect admission. The other day some couple arrived from Nagasaki, in tracksuits and inscrutable smiles, with various works of hers they wanted signed—*thirty-seven* volumes, brought all the way from Nagasaki in an old Sony television box. If she's opened the door herself and come face to face with someone, she can scarcely just slam it shut on them again, but any literary gawpers who struggle out to Windy Ways (as it's called, until we get round to changing it) will be faced with me on the doorstep, if they are not sent reeling back to town first by the sheer embarrassingness of the name. I shall be as thorough as Mr. Rochester in keeping her out of sight. And I shall take particular pleasure in seeing off all the academic bloodsuckers. Any imperious cables from the dreaded Impaler, any fourteen-page questionnaires from the dyslexic Dr. Shroff, and I shall write the replies. I think the Impaler had better start sticking his pins into wax images; Dr. Sploff had better acquire some alternative qualifications in accountancy or bookkeeping. Taking me, my bride is, and forsaking all others.

Sorry. A faint suspicion of the ludic there. A last sip before the bottle's thrown into the bin. Speaking of which . . .

I give you . . . the bride and bridegroom! A slightly premature gift, but no one's going to be giving you us tomorrow. J.L. and R.D. J.L.—that's still how I refer to her, still how I think of her. I wonder if I should try abbreviating it to J. when we're actually man and wife. What does it sound like? J. . . . *J*. . . . "Listen, J. . . . Is that you, J.? How do *you* feel about it, J., love?" She calls me Richard, incidentally. I can feel myself blushing.

No. I'll stick with J.L. That's a decision.

So this is how the story ends. I wasn't in control exactly. I'm not claiming that. But I did give the first little push, didn't I? I didn't just lie there like a bump in the road and wait to be run over. I got up and waved my arms and made her swerve. Didn't I?

I don't know. Did we ever do anything, you and I? Or did it all just come tumbling down on top of us?

Do you know I once won the Sydney and Louisa Dibdin Prize for English Composition? Little did I think, as the assembled school applauded and the chairman of the Local Education Committee pressed the richly inscribed book token into my hand, that I should end up married to one of the major writers of our time.

Little did I think, for that matter, that I should end up married.

Little did I think, period.

No, bollocks. Not little did I think at all. Big did I think. I thought I'd end up married, all right—married to the wife of one of the major writers of our time.

Here it is, then. My stag letter. Lying on its back with its legs waving in the air.

Got to get up in five hours' time. Do my stuff. Woo-hoo.

THANK you. It's a lovely thing to have, and I'm deeply touched that you went to so much trouble.

Actually, this thank-you letter is so insanely late that you've probably no longer any idea what I'm thanking you for. It's for the present. You sent me a present, remember? A great brown paper parcel. Airmail. Lot of stamps with koala bears and wallabies and things. Only not enough of them—I had to pay £4.20 excess postage. I'm joking—of course there were enough stamps. Inside—a book. A rare first edition, of a work by some rare Australian writer.

No, it really did give me a great deal of pleasure. What's only just come back to me, though, is why you were giving me a present in the first place. It was a wedding present. Because—that's right—we got married! My God, that was a long time ago—I'd forgotten I was ever single! What I think I'm trying to say, as you no doubt

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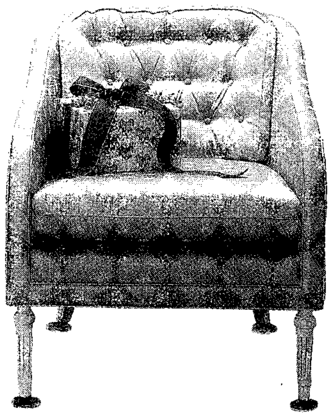

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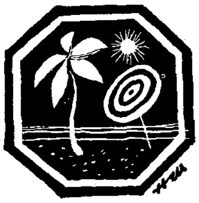
realize, is that *we* are touched, grateful, etc. After all these weeks—months even—of being married, I'm still not quite used to the conjugal we, or the impersonal tone of the joint communiqué. It gave *us* a great deal of pleasure. Didn't it, dear? Yes, she says. What, darling? Yes, my wife joins me in expressing our heartfelt thanks and appreciation. Actually she doesn't, because she's upstairs working. I made that bit up. Something to bear in mind, as a matter of fact, if you ever contemplate marriage to a Major Writer of Our Time. It's six o'clock on Sunday evening, an hour when most of the other couples in this rural paradise are well into the first bottle of Frascati. And where is she? Away in the lands of Faerie, returning who knows when. This is life with a MajWOOT—it's largely life without a MajWOOT.

In fact, this place is ideal for her. I feared she might go into a decline without the reassuring presence of dreadlocks and drunken Irishmen. But she seems entirely happy with flowers and cows. She's out in the garden half the time, deadheading the greenfly and mulching the cucumber frame. And when she's not in the garden she's baking unsliced bread, and cycling over to the Village Stores (est. 1876) for bulk supplies of organic flour and whole-meal potash. Which is, of course, one of the reasons she's still upstairs writing at this time of night. Another reason being that she is working on a very long book, and yet another being that she would be anyway. Wouldn't you, dear? She's smiling enigmatically. Or she would be if she were here. Since she's not, I can tell you something rather remarkable that I have discovered about her these last few months: she has very simple tastes. She is a very simple person. This is her secret.



So what's it about this time, you ask. What's what about? Oh, the book. Hold on, I'll shout up the stairs. What's it about, sweetheart? No answer but a dog barking somewhere, and a distant car. No, to tell you the truth, I don't ask. Why not? A certain delicacy of feeling. Or possibly because she might tell me. Don't I want to know? Of course. I long to know. I just don't want to be *told*, somehow. I want to find out for myself in the same way as I always did, by reading it.

So, there we are—the literary life at last. Oh dear, though. Looking back over this letter, I see I've already slipped into a humorous husbandly tone of voice. I had a plan to become serious. In fact I am serious. About one thing in this world, at any rate, and that's her seriousness. Sharing the same toothpaste has not reduced the honor in which I hold that. And her.

I put that bit in quickly because here she is, walking amongst us, all hallowed by her labors, and ready to eat. She's coming over to the table. She's looking abstracted—she's going to eat *me* by mistake. No, it was a kiss. I'm sorry—this is getting very sugary. Time for you and me to go our windy ways.

I CAN'T believe I haven't written for so long. I can only say that I've been busier these past few months than I have ever been in my life before. Not with departmental budgets and examiners' meetings, like you. With aunts and uncles. Also mothers and great-nieces. The majwoot has picked up old buckets and boxes in the dark corners of my life and found all these creatures creeping about—cousins and mothers and people I scarcely knew existed. Did you know I had a second cousin who holds a very senior position in the West Midlands Regional Health Authority? Of course not—I've kept the old newspapers on top of his hiding place, and if by some chance you'd picked them up and discovered him you'd have been polite enough to put them back again without inquiring further. Not so the maj. Who's this? How's *he* related to *her*? We've been crawling into little nooks and crannies all over England shaking their feelers. She puts down pots of homemade jam for them and gives them strange woolly garments to munch. So naturally they've been scurrying out into the light and infesting the spare room here. They think she's crazy. No, they don't. They think she's wonderful, just as everyone else does. We've seen my mother more often this summer than I remember seeing her when I was a boy. Funny—my wife slaughters the centipedes and replaces them with pests that are about a thousand times larger and five thousand times more destructive. Now, of course, she's upstairs working and two of the pests are bashing about around her esparto grass with a football, totally bored, and I know that sooner or later if I don't go out and entertain them they're going to . . . They have. Sorry—write a proper letter tomorrow.

WISHING You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

She bought this bloody thing, not me. Will write.

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BEST Wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

My God—Christmas again! What's happening?

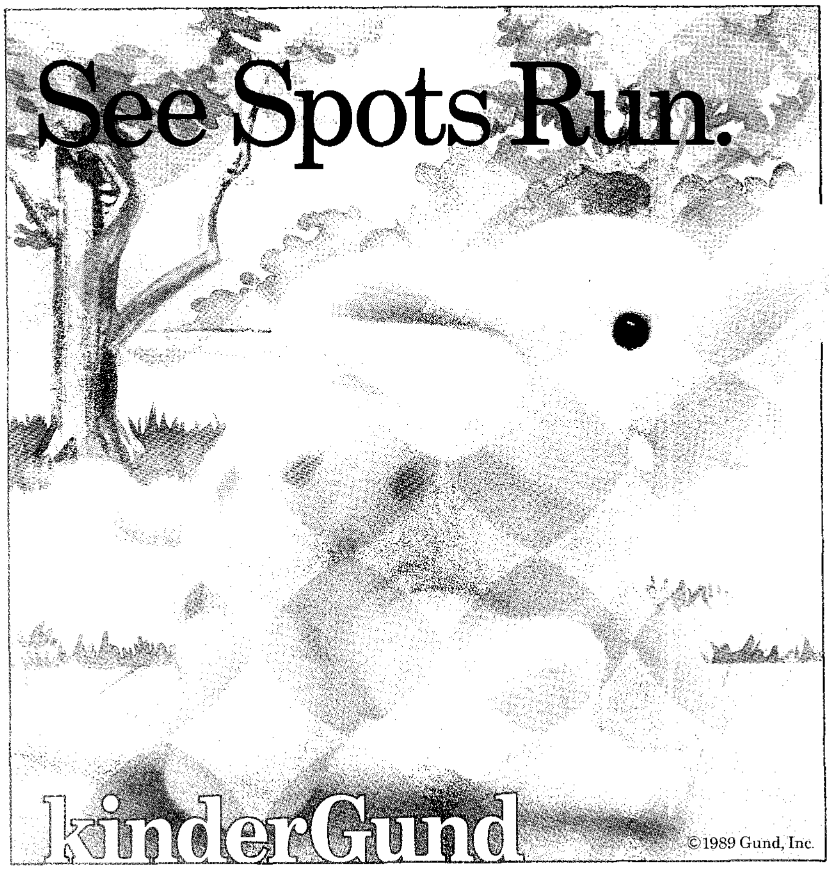
We're both well. How about you and yours? Will write.

Which reminds me—I get occasional postcards and Christmas cards from someone in Melbourne with that signature—Will Write. Could be a relation. Don't know him; do you, by any chance?

CONGRATULATIONS on Charles James Brewett Edward. The name alone is the longest communication we've had from you in months. I very much admire the way it starts quietly, like an old-fashioned novel, with several chapters of exposition, then suddenly bursts out into the entirely unexpected vehemence of "Brewett," followed by the quietly happy ending of "Edward." Eight pounds three ounces—that sounds a very healthy weight. Is that just the name, or is that the baby as well?

Anyway, well done, all three of you. I now feel very guilty that I didn't send you a card to announce the happy event at our end—the arrival of "The Invisible Banquet," a much-wanted little brother for "The Book of Angels' Dreams," "The Sunday Runners," "Falling Down Duke Street," "Scatterbrain," "Whistling Woman," etc. Ten pounds five ounces, our little monster—I've just weighed the typescript. The precious bundle was put into my arms six weeks before Charles James, etc., saw the light of day, and I should be happy to share with you the experience I have gained of fatherhood. It's a difficult time for the father, don't you find? You don't have space on your printed card to go into all the details of pregnancy and labor. Did you go to classes yourself to prepare? Was it a natural birth? Were you present? Did your baby have to be sent away for typing? Ours was so natural that I didn't even realize it had happened. I'd forgotten the maj was pregnant, to tell you the truth, it had all gone on for so long. Or rather I'd forgotten pregnancy was a condition that ever came to an end. So when Her Maj came downstairs that evening—it was a Tuesday, just after seven o'clock—and said, "I think that's very possibly it," I didn't faint or burst into tears. I merely inquired, "*What's* very possibly it? What's very possibly *what*?" Didn't I, dear? She's smiling at the memory. I may even have spoken with slight asperity. I thought she was referring to some private thought of hers about the garden—she was gazing absently out of the window at the time. It crossed my mind that she might just possibly be announcing the end of our marriage. Did I snarl, darling? I can see from her expression that I did. Probably there was no such ambiguity over the arrival of C. J. Brewett E.

Have you suffered from the traditional feelings of jealousy and exclusion since, though? I've felt twinges, I must confess; I think sometimes that I should have found some preparatory classes to go to, and got myself in the right frame of mind for fatherhood. And that's another question. *Am* I the father? I talk about "our" book, and dandle it fondly on my knee. I even occasionally change a dirty spelling. But did I in fact have anything to do with it? There's some uncertainty as to the date of its conception. It's different for you. You know the date of D.'s last period—may even recall a particular night when the ovum was ripe and the moon was high. But who knows even in which month an idea is planted in someone's mind? I probably didn't tell you at the time, because it made such a misery of our first months together, but an earlier book miscarried. (So all that manuscript I saved for posterity in the Battle on the Stairs went the same way as yesterday's papers.) When she subsequently started "The Invisible Banquet," was it ours—or was it from some dreadful old frozen sperm she'd found at the back of the refrigerator? That's what they do, you know, these people. Where you keep a few bottles of the local Coonawarra Riesling chilled and ready they keep the little test tubes full of seminal essences from every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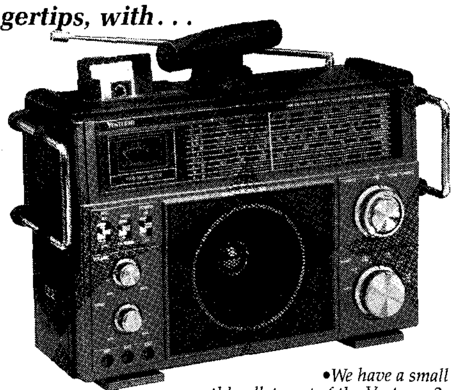

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encounter they've ever had. I can't recognize anything of me in little "Banquet." It's got its mother's eyes, that's the only likeness I can perceive. I mean it doesn't blink, whatever horrors are occurring.

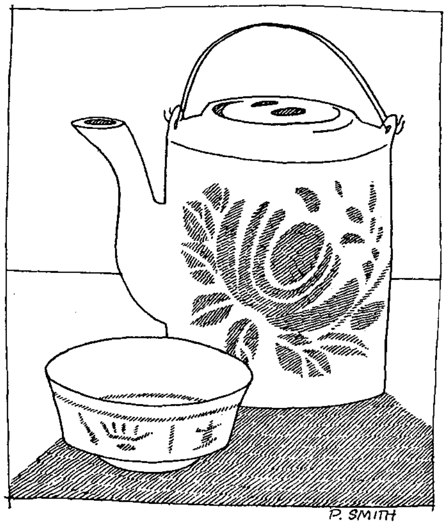
And horrors keep occurring—far more horrors than ever before. Here we sit in Windy Ways, with the cows mooing just beyond the rhododendrons, and there in our book are aircraft tumbling out of the sky, a dog eating half an old-age pensioner, a girl raped on a runaway Underground train by a group of marauding centaurs. This isn't *my* nose! These aren't *my* knees! Or perhaps they are. Perhaps this is what I'm like. Even you and D. may get surprises from your little publication, of course, as time goes on. Why does Charles James have such a thirst for revenge? How have you so hurt and failed him? But I've had all my surprises in life already. Because two weeks after our fat infant had been placed in my arms, peacefully sleeping, it was a bundle of hopes and prospects no longer. I'd read it to the end. I knew everything about it that there ever would be to know.

Of course, it's a wonderful book. I should have said that before. Strange and sombre and audacious. And I do realize that fiction is invented. After all, I've spent my entire career explaining to students that the inventedness of fiction is its sign and glory. But that doesn't mean it comes out of nowhere, made out of nothing. What inventors invent tells you *something* about the world they inhabit. So when I'm presented with ten pounds five ounces of raw lights I have to ask myself: What is she trying to tell me about our life behind the rhododendrons? What is she trying to tell the rest of the world about it?

And maybe it's not such a wonderful book, after all. I say this to you in absolute confidence. Think about it, though. Here's someone living peacefully in the depths of the countryside. One peaceful husband, peacefully employed, and peacefully married to *her* rather than someone else. No one throwing things down the stairs. Loudest noise the blackbird outside the window. Nothing more violent to do than murder the slugs. And when she goes up to her book-lined study under the eaves, what does she write about? Not blackbirds and slugs, of course—I understand that. But people being raped on the Northern Line? A pair of abandoned shoes left inside a cupboard—with a pair of abandoned feet inside them? Homeless naiads living in the sewers? And all this, of course, going on up in bloody London! Don't you feel there's something just a shade . . . I don't know . . . *inauthentic* about it all? Don't you think she's pushing it a bit? Overcompensating for the blackbirds?

Then again, *I* know that the middle-aged woman in the book who becomes involved in a coven of witches is not my dear old maj, or anything like her. But will anyone else? *I* know that the rather feeble young man whom she kidnaps, then ties up, strips, and rapes at a kind of feminist Black Mass is not me, or even any symbolic representation of me. But will the casual reader know? Will my colleagues? Will Swoff? Will Vlad? Will *you*?

I lift my head from this page for a moment, and watch you reading it. I see that terrible right eyebrow of yours, which has scythed down greater men than me, once again upraised to strike. Yes, yes, yes—I realize I'm not being quite rational about this. I am aware that there are dark shapes stirring in the depths inside me as well as inside her, which you can see from up there on the bank more clearly than I can down here. One of them, of course, is simple jealousy. But I can see *that* great black carp for myself. All right—I'm jealous. Naturally. She's fecund; I'm not. I'd have to be half-witted not to be jealous. Though actually I'm *not* jealous, now I come to think about it. That's the odd thing. I rejoice for her—I rejoice with her. I just wish there were a little more to rejoice about. I can't help feeling what a wonderful writer she was until I came along. This is what "Banquet" is telling me—that I've grabbed hold of a delicate and beautiful machine, like a child taking its father's watch, and somehow ruined it. So now the watch is striking thirteen . . . fifteen . . . twenty-three . . . seventy . . . going on and on like a burglar alarm instead of a watch, making some kind of accusation. To me and to all the world. Well, accusation and self-exculpation, counter-accusation and counter-exculpation—I suppose this is the basic mode of communication between married couples. No doubt for you and D., too—or will be soon enough. But you do it all in private! Not in editions of tens of thousands in hardback, followed by hundreds of thousands in paperback, plus promotion in North America and translation into Japanese.



Of course, what's sauce for the gander ought to be sauce for the goose, and if she can chop me up for sushi in Japan, and mince me to fill hamburgers in Missouri, then I have every right to tell a handful of students and fellow-specialists that I feel one or two reservations about *her*. And she wouldn't even know I'd done it. She has never, in all the time I've known her, read a single word I have written about her—and it's not as if I'd faced her with ten lb. five oz. on the subject to get through. Even so, I can't do it. I can't stand up at the lectern and tell the world my wife's latest book is *inauthentic!* That's why I'm writing to you after all this time. I have my professional pride. I have to put my true feelings on record somewhere, even if it's only on a piece of paper that is then wrapped up and taken twelve thousand miles away, to be read by one single soul who will never reveal the contents to anyone.

So I haven't said any of this to her, then? Not directly. Have I, my sweetheart? She's shaking her head. But she's not a fool—she knows. Don't you, my precious?

She's nodding bashfully. Only of course she isn't. She's shut away upstairs under the eaves, doing heaven knows what. She's gone into a bit of a postnatal depression, to tell you the truth. And I know what she's thinking. She can see my reservations about this book spreading slowly back to the earlier ones—then soaking up through them until they reach the author herself. She sees herself fading in my estimation from majwoot to minwoot—perhaps from majwife to minwife. Which just goes to show how little people understand about literary criticism if they never read it. The whole point of it is to discriminate. Though of course that pair of spare feet at the bottom of the wardrobe does, in fact, seem a bit like a parody of the dead mouse in a teapot in T.B.A.D., or the famous bloodstains on the tablecloth in W.W. But there was nothing forced or arbitrary about those earlier touches of the grotesque. Or was there? And then suddenly I can't help thinking that there's something a bit arbitrary, a bit sudden, about *her.* Marrying me, for example. Walking out on her life in London and moving up here. Wasn't that a little improvised? Out of nowhere? Not properly prepared and worked toward in the earlier chapters? A bit like jumping out of the train in some station whose name you don't even know?

What *is* she doing up in her study, in point of fact? She can't still be working, because she's finished the damned thing. Is she just gazing mournfully out of the window? Writing to some old friend about how difficult I'm being? My God—she can't be starting another one! Already? I've always hoped that we'd have more books eventually, of course. But there is such a thing as family planning! She needs to get her strength back first—*I* need to get my strength back.

"Banquet" still needs a lot of attention, for one thing. I say it's finished—but do one's parental responsibilities ever end? I'm going through it again at the moment, like a good father, marking all kinds of suggestions in the margin. I'm struggling to overcome my natural diffidence because I feel that this is one way in which I really can help instead of hinder—that I can put any slight negative feelings I have to positive use. I'm so close to her work—I know considerably more about it than she does. I'm also rather more passionately committed to it than she is. So I am simply the only person in the world who can assist with little "Banquet," whether I'm the father or not. I long to hold out my arms to it and help it walk, help it speak and read and do its French homework. I'm full of ideas—I'm proposing a whole new section in which she steps into the picture herself, as it were, and makes some kind of ironic comment on the sheer number of loose feet and electrocuted domestic pets there are littering these pages. This is what would help our strange little infant with his problems—some sense of detachment, of ironic self-awareness.

My God, though! When she sees quite how much red ink there is over her typescript she's going to retreat to her room for a month.

Here she comes. I can hear her on the stairs. She's stopped. . . . No, she's going back. . . . What's happening? Hold on.

It wasn't her at all. It was my mother wandering around the house. We've got her with us, on top of everything. Not my idea. Her Majesty went over to see her last week, and found her very confused, gazing out of the window (a trait they have in common), with no food in the house. So she simply bundled her up like a parcel, put her in the car, and brought her back. This, it seemed to me, was a rather remarkable thing to do. Remarkably decisive. Remarkably generous. Remarkably vexing. Another of her suddennesses. Zig—marries me. Zag—rescues my mother. She's been careering all over West Yorkshire and Devon this spring, like some maniac with a metal detector, digging forgotten old aunts and half cousins of mine out of the earth. I just hope she's not going to bring any more trophies home. I've got to get my mother into some suitable museum first.

I think, on mature reflection, that I got a little carried away when I described "Banquet" as *inauthentic.* That's a rather terrible thing to say—particularly in this case, since it's entirely untrue. In fact, I regard the book as being among my wife's highest achievements, and am proud if I had any hand in making it what it is.

So to hell with me.

WHY didn't you *write* to say you were coming? (Remember writing? All those clever little blue marks you used to make on bits of paper when you were younger, to impress your elders, and defend yourself against me?) What a strange man you are! If you'd *written,* instead of creeping into the country like abdicated royalty, and trying to astonish me with a surprise telephone call from ten miles down the road, we should have arranged receptions and dinner parties for you, and introduced you to fascinating local characters. You wouldn't have had to

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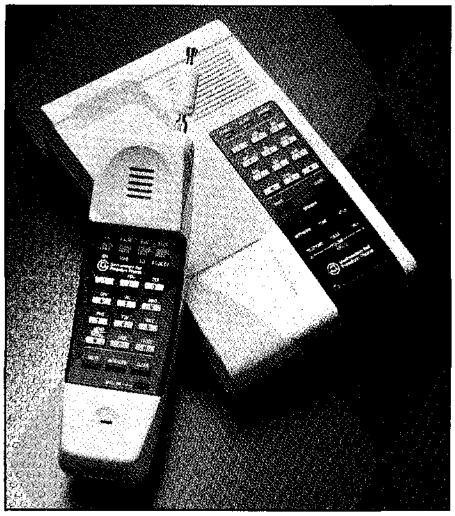

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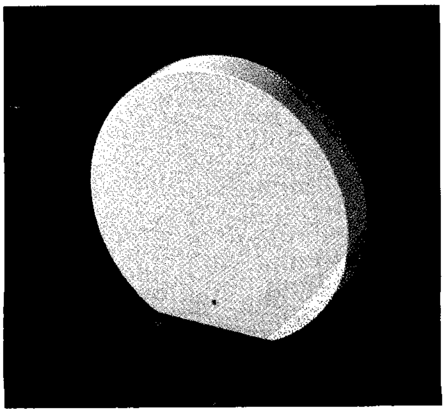

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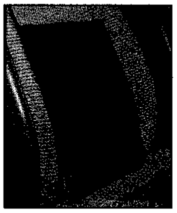

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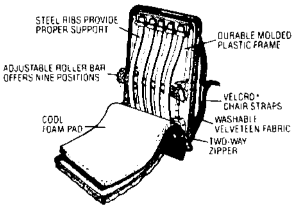
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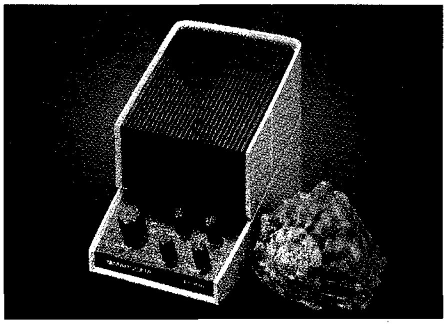

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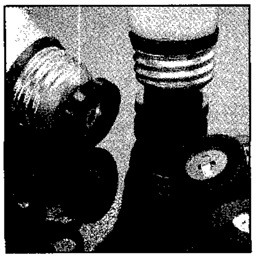

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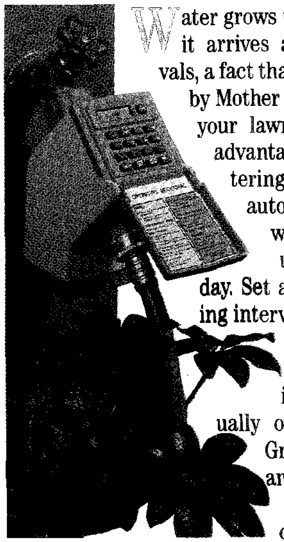

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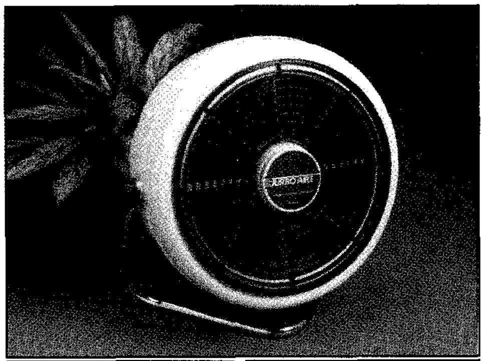

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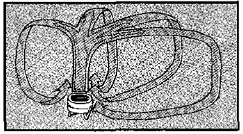

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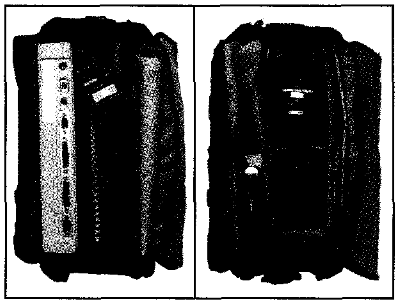

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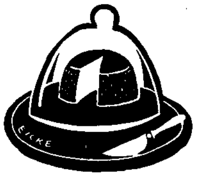
make do with just us and my mother. If we'd known you were coming we'd have baked a complete social and intellectual context for you.

Anyway, it *was* astonishing to see you again. Well, not so astonishing, really—rather astonishingly unastonishing, to tell you the truth. Moving, though, and disconcerting, and reassuring, and somehow rather irritating. Yes, I did for some reason feel *irritated* the whole time you were here. Partly, I suppose, at being taken by surprise, without the chance to prepare a successful life for you to see. But also because you kept grinning all the time. And then again because I kept grinning. And because of what we were grinning at, which was not each other but your bloody infant. My wife, with her professional powers of expression and range of vocabulary, said it for both of us. "He's wonderful," she said, if you remember, not once but many times. "Isn't he wonderful? He's so wonderful!," etc. This is, of course, what people always say about *her*, so it was a particularly striking tribute. We both also very much took to D. I know my wife didn't pick her up and bounce her on her knee, as she did Charles. But this, she explained privately to me afterward, is because D. seemed such a fragile little creature. So beautiful, so delicate—tinier than Charles, was my impression. My wife liked you, too, I must report. The reason she didn't pick you up and bounce you was the opposite one—she was too awed by your size and substance. So, I may say, was I. Is that the result of domesticity and contentment? Or is it just the Coonawarra? Anyway, we discussed you all very fully after you'd gone, and my wife, who, as you know, has little critical discrimination, gave enthusiastic reviews to all three of you.



In fact, this was the other irritating thing about your visit. We discussed you at such length that we couldn't remember where we'd got to with the row we were having before you arrived. I say "row," but that's a word for newspaper headlines and television comedies. It doesn't do justice to the complexity of the negotiations and maneuverings in which we were engaged, and which extended over such a vast theatre that after you had distracted us we could neither of us quite remember where the minefields were, or which side Bulgaria had been on, or what secrets we were guarding, or who was winning.

So we had to start the whole war all over again, and of course we couldn't remember even what the starting point was. If, indeed, we'd ever known. In any case, this wasn't even anything as definite as a war, and the question of what it was about was, so far as I recall, one of the issues at stake. Was it because I didn't like her book? (This is what she believes I believe.) Or was it because *she* doesn't like her book? (Which is what *I* believe I believe.)

The truth is that her confidence in "Banquet" began to drain away while I was still reading it—long before I said anything about it to her. I would be reading the typescript, and I would suddenly realize that she had come quietly downstairs from her study in the middle of the working day, to stand looking out of the window or at the floor in some odd way—a way that maddeningly indicated how very careful she was being not to look at me and see how I was enjoying it. At which I, of course, would make my face more carefully expressionless than ever. Then she would disappear upstairs in a marked manner, and stay there for even longer than usual, to indicate that I was reading in some hurtful way.

I was amazed by all this; I'd never seen her behave like this. For as long as I had known her, apart from the day of the Battle on the Stairs, and a month or two of gloom when she lost the previous book, she had been confident, decisive, and untroubled. But then ever since the miscarriage she had been writing *this* book. She had been walking the parapets in her sleep, and now for the first time she was awake. She saw what a remote part of the roof she had got herself onto, and how precipitous were the drops on every hand. But when I showed her the queries I'd marked in the margins, and mentioned the ideas I'd had for improvements, she found reasons for dismissing them all in turn. I conceded almost everything in exchange for her accepting my principal point—that the book needed some strong central framework of ironic self-awareness to make its extravagance acceptable. She wept. (She actually wept!) I was firm. She said the book had taken her more than two years to write. I said all the more reason for taking another four weeks to rescue it. She said it was her book, not mine. I said that's why I was arguing with her. She threatened to abandon it completely. I threatened to let her. She retired to her study for several days, then came down with a new section in which an authorial figure of some kind emerges from her study and comes downstairs to confront the mayhem she has created. She asked if this was what I had meant. I said the question was if it was what *she* had meant. She said I seemed to know what she meant better than she did, etc., etc. I said this was a refusal to take responsibility for her own actions, etc., etc. Meanwhile, she has heard from her agent and publisher. And of course they love it. They think it's the best thing she has ever done, and, I am sincerely pleased to report, have no reservations at all.

Well, they have *one*. They neither of them like the bit where the authorial figure emerges from her study and comes downstairs.

You laugh. I laughed myself, of course. *She* laughed—a rare event. I plainly had to withdraw. Three to one against, and what was my opinion worth against theirs? I'm merely a poor dull scholar who happens to have devoted his life to the study and explication of her works. I also just happen to be *right*, though. A graceless thing to be; I apologize for it. There are very few things I am certain of in this world, but I *know* that this book will never work without an ironic framework to distance it, and if her agent and publisher don't like the small corner of a framework she has now provided it's because she wrote it half-heartedly, and sent it on to them separately, as if it were an afterthought. Which of course it was, but all the more reason for not allowing it to look like one.

The other thing that's wrong with the new framework, of course, is that there's simply not enough of it. The answer is not to give up but to press on—to provide lots and lots more of what they don't like until they learn to like it. And I am not going to withdraw gracefully. I am going to stand my ground. You know how passionately I admire her earlier books. Not one of them, though, that wouldn't be improved by a little more analysis and organization, by some really clear hard thinking about where they're going and what they're trying to do. So I'm fighting. Fighting her agent and publisher. Fighting her.

I have to give her the confidence to go forward. And I have to do it by shaking her confidence in where she is standing now. That's the paradox that, as we both know, is inherent in every teacher's task, in every critic's role.

Now a sudden doubt begins to assail *me*.

I am right in thinking so highly of her earlier books, aren't I? You've read them. (At least, I assume you've read them.) I haven't simply been deluding myself all these years, have I? A terrible question to ask. I can feel the earth move under my feet. But some hard-faced young market analyst isn't just about to jump out of nowhere with a massive reëvaluation, which is going to leave all us shareholders with portfolios full of wastepaper?

I'm sorry. I'm using up my stocks of confidence replenishing hers.

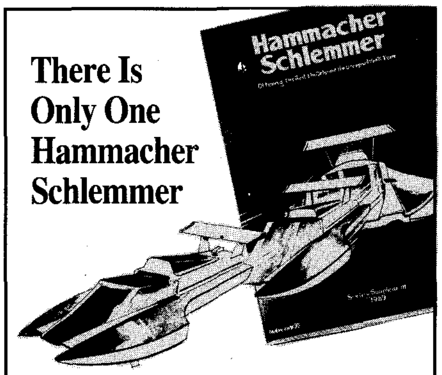
FIRST the good news: Dr. Swoff likes it.

Dr. Spoff (who is not a real woman, of course, but a humorous personification of the Society for the Propagation of Feminist Fiction) thinks that "Banquet" is (and I quote the letter from the publishers which brought the glad tidings) "an astonishing new milestone in the development of the author's fiction . . . the keystone that accomplishes and locks the arch of her achievement . . . " A milestone, you see, and yet at the same time a keystone. What other critic could put it with such compelling grace? But how, you will ask, has an unpublished manuscript fallen into the hands of a critic? Even more to the point, how did the particular pair of critical hands in question come to belong to the great Dr. Sloff? Presumably the publisher sent it to her. You will ask why a publisher should airfreight ten lb. five oz. of unpublished fiction across the Atlantic behind his author's back. Why he should be seeking the opinion of some consultant in Arkansas when we already have the opinions, copiously and freely given, of a full-time resident consultant here—me. The answer is simple. J.L.'s publisher and agent are trying to come between husband and wife. They are struggling to persuade the wife to abandon the small improvements she had made to the book at her husband's suggestion. These consist of ironic personal interventions by the author in four different parts of the manuscript, transforming it (in my humble opinion) from an interesting genre piece into a potentially major work of art, and adding no more than half an ounce at most to its over-all weight. (I say potentially because I feel—and she on the whole agrees—that we need at least another seven similar sections elsewhere in the text to complete the transformation.) The publisher says nothing in his letter about the four new sections, of course, nor does Dr. Smoff, which is how I know he has not shown her the latest draft. Because if he had she would have joined the general outcry against the sections. With her limited and stilted powers of response, she would have liked them no more than the chairman of the group, and the managing director of the children's book division, and the woman who works the copying machine, and all the various other distinguished authorities they have dragged in to put pressure on J.L.

Well, I *assume* the manuscript was sent to Oklahoma behind J.L.'s back. I *assume* she is not secretly conniving in an appeal to an authority for whom, as she well knows, I feel a particular professional contempt. All the rest of the crew's bailed out; maybe the pilot's slipped silently out of the cockpit as well, and I'm the only person left aboard to get the stricken jumbo down.

Sorry. I'm becoming slightly obsessed. None of this can be of much interest to you. It's just that when you can actually see the answer to a problem, and apparently no one else can—when your entire life and work have enabled you to help bring something of true transcendent perfection into this imperfect world . . .

Sorry, sorry. I'm really writing to thank you for your letter. I was very touched by your offer. Yes, by all means let me know if you hear of a job going in Australia. I don't think I'd succumb, but it would be nice to be tempted. You're too tactful to put it in so many words, but you're correct in your implication that my career is somewhat becalmed. I assume I'll be renewed, but it would take an outbreak of botulism at some annual conference of university English specialists before I had any realistic prospects of promotion in this country. And J.L.,



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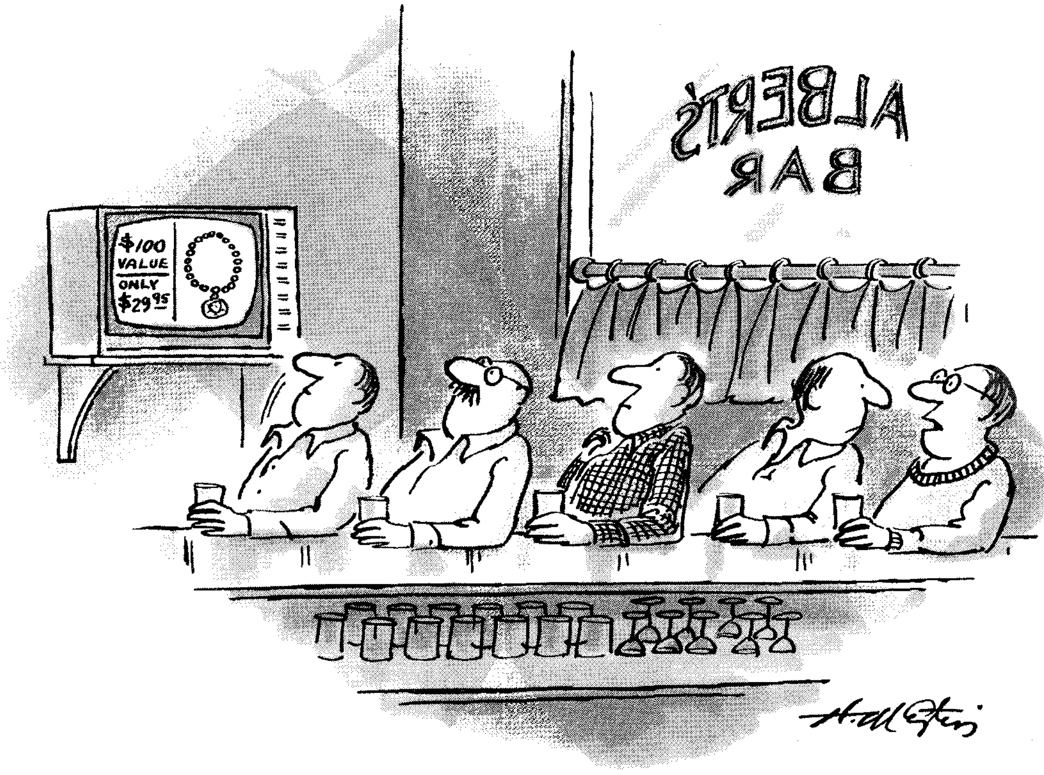

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as you say, could work anywhere.

And yet one does get quite attached to one's pigsty, you know. These gray skies and chill winds; these dreadful dormers; these bonfires smoking sullenly at the bottom of the garden; these long silences while she works; this great muddy battlefield that stretches around us from horizon to horizon—it's home.

I don't think I could uproot J.L. again, in any case. She's forty-eight next year, which is a bit late in life to change hemispheres. Once "Banquet" is out of the way she'll presumably be struggling to start the next one. Easy to lose the baby, as you know, in those first few months. By the time she's really got into her stride, though, she certainly won't want to be interrupted. And then, if I know her obstinate, dogged nature, she'll want to keep her head down until she's finished. By which time, of course, she'll be in her fifties—and starting the process all over again. My one gift to her in this life has been the stability and peace she needs to work. Which is to say that nothing has happened, nothing is happening now, and nothing will ever happen again. Not if I can help it. No lovers, no Japanese autograph-hunters on the doorstep. I go through the mail. I am deeply discouraging on the telephone. I have built a cork-lined life around her.

Her only distraction is my family. I don't know why she finds them so interesting. They seem to me about as dull as a family can get. I feel rather uneasy; all these old pots and pans at the back of the cupboard, and suddenly here's some grand antique dealer wanting to look at them. It's become a ritual; I don't see her giving it up to go to Australia. She suddenly tells me on Sunday morning that we're having tea with my Auntie Annie in Sowerby, or Ted and June and Mrs. Naylor and Bill whatever his name is and his sister Viv in Hebden Bridge—although none of that lot are really family at all; I don't know where we picked them up. I complain, and sulk, and make us late. She drives—I read the map wrong—we get even later. But when we arrive, of course, we put on a bit of a show. And it's all very jolly; my relations are proud of me, because I've got on, and I'm proud of them, when it comes down to it, because they haven't. They've never heard of her, of course. I've told them she writes books, but they didn't take it too seriously—they can see she's just one of them. So Auntie Annie puts her hand on J.L.'s arm (which she never does on mine), and tells her about laying her mother out and washing her ("I used carbolic soap, my love. For the germs, you see. And that's where I went wrong, because you could smell her halfway down the stairs"). Ted and June go through the accounts of the shop with her, ice cream by ice cream. Viv whispers to her about Bill's prostate. And of course I'm tremendously bored. But in some weird way I enjoy it. All I know is that when J.L. and I drive back we're always in a good mood. And I never lose the way.

Her own family were solid professional people—I suppose that's what makes mine seem so picturesque in comparison. I can't say that the converse is true, though most of her lot are dead, which may take the shine off them a little.

As a matter of fact, J.L. and my mother became very close toward the end. My mother disapproved of her for a start, of course (you were the only friend of mine she ever showed some cautious enthusiasm for). You'd have thought one's parents might be reassured to have their child marry someone a little closer to their own age. But my mother wouldn't even come to the wedding reception. She took one look at J.L. in the registry office, and afterward she wouldn't speak—wouldn't even take my arm to go down the steps. "Oh, Richard"—that was all she said. "Oh, Richard." Then she got back into the car I'd hired for her, and wasn't seen again. J.L. won her over finally, though. She was the one who found her gazing out of the window with nothing to eat, and brought her home to stay with us. She was the one who persuaded her to see the doctor. She was the one who coaxed her into the local hospital, and washed her nightdresses, and sat with her every afternoon while she was still conscious.

Did I tell you my mother had died? Last November. Secondaries in the bowel. Perhaps I didn't even tell you she had cancer.

Or how much I loved her.

I'm not sure I've even told you how

much I love J.L., for that matter. In spite of what you might think.

But then men don't talk about these things.

I'VE suddenly discovered the joys of free-fall parachuting.

It was at one of the sessions the Pope has taken to holding in his office on Monday mornings to talk about the future of the department. He was rambling on in his now familiar style to me and B.D. and Lynn Welsh about outreach to industry and a market-led approach to the arts, and I was just thinking, "Poor old Lynn—this sounds like the final curtain for her dreadful 'Theatre and the Dynamic for Social Change' course," when it suddenly dawned on me that *I* was the one who was being brought in for a respray. "A shift of emphasis from the literary to the visual narrative . . . a growing awareness of the financial implications of fiction . . . the development of communication skills . . ." When he got onto the challenge of cable and satellite television I thought I'd better save him from embarrassing us all further. "Why don't you discuss these exciting new perspectives with whoever you appoint to teach the course?" I said, with heroic insouciance. "Since my resignation will take effect before it begins?"

No great clamor, I'm afraid, greeted my announcement. No overwhelming demand was voiced by either management or staff for the resignation to be withdrawn. His Holiness himself inclined his head in silence, and raised his hands, as if gracefully submitting to a gunman. Polite surprise, I think, this was intended to convey, together with acceptance, and possibly also a parting benediction as I withdrew from the papal presence. "Oh," he said, softly but with great significance, and the remark seemed to him so apt that he made it again—"Oh." And then he said it three times more, with a pause for reflection before each performance. "Oh," he said. "Oh. Oh."

So there I was, falling through the empty sky, with the plane dwindling in the distance. And what I felt was pure exhilaration. No more fastening of seat belts! No more air-traffic delays! No more powdered coffee in plastic cups!

You may, it occurs to me, think I left the plane rather precipitately. A routine announcement from the captain about diverting to a slightly different destination, and I was out of the door, taking the quick way home. But this was only the last of a long series of hints that I was going to be bumped off the flight sooner or later. In any case, it's J.L. they're getting at, not me. That's why I felt such an intoxicatingly generous rush of indignation. The Pope and his supporters in the Holy Office have been trying to get her off the syllabus for a long time, though they've never had the courage to say so to my face. The insinuation used to be that the students weren't interested in her books anymore. This was a downright lie. Plenty of students have complained to me about every other author on the syllabus, from Ariosto to Ed McBain. Not one, though—not *one* —who has ever come up to me and said, "I don't see why I should have to read your wife's books." They *like* them, insofar as they like anything. T.B.A.D., one of them told me only last week, was "quite a chunky number."

In fact, what the Holy Father and his unholy crew object to is really neither her nor me. It's the combination. It's husband expounding his own wife. They've never dared say it to me —and I suspect they can't even formulate to themselves what's worrying them—but from the very beginning they've felt some strange primitive distaste, some obscure disgust as for the prospect of kid seethed in its mother's milk.

I know what's brought the Curia's discontent to the surface now. It used to be her supposed unpopularity; now it's exactly the opposite! It's because they've made "Scatterbrain" into a television series. You'd have thought this was precisely what they wanted—market-led, popular communication—with commercials!—for all I know piped through cables and bounced off satellites. But in a funny way it's too highbrow to be lowbrow and too lowbrow to be highbrow. Huge numbers of people are watching it. Including a lot of the students. Even the Holy Mother, I happen to know. It's terrible, incidentally.

So there I am, falling down the empty sky. That's why I'm writing. To say PLEASE SEND PARACHUTE. Because it occurred to me only when I finally reached to open it that I had omitted before leaving the plane to provide myself with this obvious and elementary requisite for the sport.

Let me put metaphor aside, and say it in raw plain English: I need a job. You wrote I think in the last letter but one that you'd let me know about the chances of a job in Australia. Did you by any chance happen to notice one lying around? You didn't mention it in your last letter, but perhaps this was because I didn't have the prescience to take you up on it earlier. It wouldn't have to be in Sydney or Melbourne. Or even Adelaide or Perth. I'd be happy to float down to earth in some quite small place, if that's where the work was. Some little sheep-shearing town in the middle of the bush would do me fine. Anywhere they might like to hear about the narrative tradition from the Mabinogion to Magic Realism. Or the non-narrative tradition . . . Or the changing significance of the sheep in the pastoral poetry of the late eighteenth century . . . Or how to write television scripts . . .

In short, I'll do anything. Except live off my wife. Living in her house for the last four years has been bad enough. I've told her I'm looking for work abroad. She didn't raise any objection. She didn't say anything at all, just went on repairing the vacuum cleaner. Later I realized she was walking round the garden in a rather marked manner, looking thoughtfully at the plants. But she could perfectly well make another garden. Don't worry about her work—she can work anywhere. As long as she's got her head with her, that's all she needs.

She certainly doesn't need *me.* I might just as well not exist, as far as she is concerned. I think I told you I made a number of very careful and sympathetic suggestions about her book. Well, I now discover that she has adopted none of them. Not that she bothered to inform me. As far as I knew, she was still sitting in her study considering them. To tell you the truth, I'd rather forgotten the book, with all this great uprush of air past my ears. I was standing in the hall one morning, absorbed in my own grievances, when the postman arrived with a bulging package from her publishers. The proofs. Even while she had been going through the motions of listening to my criticisms, tramping down the stairs with halfhearted redrafts to show me, then tramping back again and tearing them up, the publishers had been setting the original manuscript. She'd been performing fiction for my benefit. I thought about this during the day, with growing indignation, and put it to her, politely but forcefully, that evening. She looked evasively out of the window. She is a profoundly evasive person, I have discovered.

I'm sorry. Slightly tense moment, though, in all our lives. That green-and-yellow landscape under my falling feet is getting very close. I can see now—it's not meadows and cornfields at all. It's swamps and stony desert.

I'VE found the answer to one of life's riddles, anyway—I now know what it is she's been doing in her study every day. I was slightly mortified that I had to get on to it by chance, in the course of making small talk with her agent on the phone while I was waiting for her to come in from the garden to take the call. "How's it going, anyway?" asked her agent, in a humorous tone of voice which I think she believes suitable for talking to university lecturers. "Oh, fine," I lied, assuming, ridiculously, that she was referring to something connected with me. My work, perhaps. My career. My life. Things. The indefinable *it* whose going is usually inquired about on these occasions. "Fine," I assured her a second time, to make it more true. "That's jolly good news," said her agent, who has to be convincingly chummy with all the variously unsuitable consorts her clients choose for themselves. "Because she's being awfully mysterious about it with me."

This is when I realized we were not aboard the same train. We were on parallel tracks, gazing through the glass at each other, only a few feet apart, as if sharing a compartment. But a gap was opening up between us. How did I know that it was not my work, my career, my life, my *it* that my wife was being so mysterious with her agent about? I just did—I just happen to have enough self-knowledge to know that people don't go round being mysterious about me. The only thing I didn't know was where her agent's train was heading. "What?" I said. Some faint inkling came to her at this point, I think, that I was about to veer off the main line. "What?" she said, uncertainly. "I'm sorry," I told her frankly, "I don't think I know what we're talking about." "This new thing of hers," she said. "This whatever-it-is that she's written the first something-or-other of." "Oh, that," I said. "Yes, yes." And of course she realized that my train was stopping short at some small suburban station, while I realized that she was disappearing over the horizon aboard the non-stop Pullman.

So, my wife had written the first something-or-other of a new whatever-it-was. As one of the country's leading specialists in her works (until the end of the current academic year, at any rate), I was naturally pleased to know this. After nine novels and a collection of short stories she was adventuring into the uncharted waters of the whatever-it-was. What did she feel about the possibilities of this exciting new form? Our interviewer took up the question with her over dinner.

INTERVIEWER: I believe I'm right in saying that you've finished the first something-or-other of a new whatever-it-is? Your agent was telling me on the phone this morning. She asked how it was going. I gave a somewhat guarded reply. I hope that was right.

J.L.: Oh, that. That's just something I'm trying to . . . I don't know. . . . Something.

INT.: So it's not a novel?

J.L.: Oh, no. At least I don't think so.

INT.: My God—it's not *literary criticism*? No, I can see from that absolutely spontaneous curl of the lip that it's not literary criticism. What are we left with? Biography?

J.L.: You've been looking on my desk, have you?

INT.: Certainly not. So it's biography.

J.L.: It's not biography. It's not even remotely biography.

INT.: Non-biography, then. Non-biography of whom, I wonder. Not of *me*, by any chance?

J.L.: No.

INT.: Not me?

J.L.: No. I'm trying to write something about your mother.

And there you have it. She is trying

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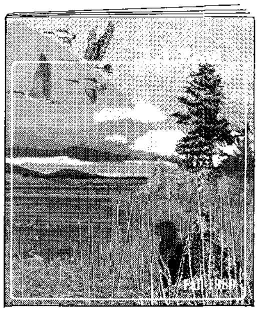

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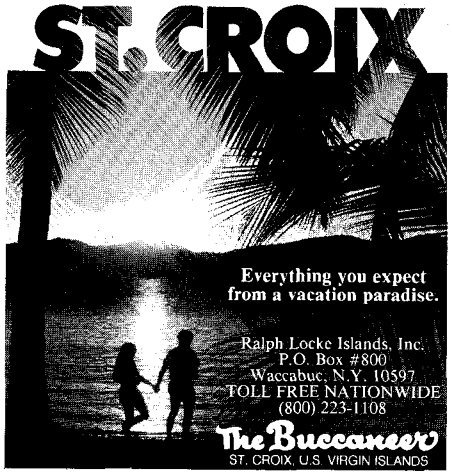

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to write something about my mother. She is wrestling with literary form, struggling (as she went on to explain) to find some simple, direct way of recording the bare facts of my mother's birth, life, and death; of her appearance and character; of her thoughts and feelings; of marking her passage through the world. The book (if we can assume for the moment that the whatever-it-is will at least have pages and a jacket with a price on the front flap) may reach out to take in other members of my family as well. Auntie Annie in Sowerby, for example, and Ted and June and Mrs. Naylor in Hebden Bridge. Everyone she's met. Even possibly Bill and his sister Viv, who are not in actual fact related to us. Every single one of the tribe. Except me.

I'm naturally delighted. Delighted that Aunt Annie is going to be suitably memorialized. Delighted that poor Ted and June, after a lifetime's drudgery in that terrible little shop, are going to be vivisected for literary experiment. Particularly delighted that J.L. has got some reward for nursing my mother in her last illness. My poor mother, I suspect, would probably have left her something in her will, if only she'd had something to leave. It would probably have been a great comfort to her to know that she was, after all, bequeathing her entire life.

Then again, I have to confess to a certain pique that I have not been found edible myself. My entire family lies gasping on the bank, waiting to be gutted and filleted and turned into delicious fish stew, while I'm tossed back into the river.

No, on the whole I was delighted. So delighted, in fact, that the very next day I wrote to accept a job in the University of Abu Dhabi. Did I mention I'd applied? Probably not; it was just one of a whole series of random mail shots I've fired off in the last few months, each wilder than the last. Oh, that's what I should have said at the beginning of this letter, not forty-eight pages later: Thank you! I mean for taking so much trouble over that job in Cairns. I should have jumped at it, of course, if I hadn't already jumped in the direction of the Persian Gulf. Still, it's a good thing from the point of view of her research—much easier to drive over to Sowerby from the Persian Gulf than from Queensland.

No, it will be ideal for her. Long days uninterrupted by telephone calls from agents or admirers. (Do you know she is not published in Arabic? I checked.) Shutters over the windows, nothing to be heard but the hypnotic hum of the air-conditioner. Perfect ambience for writing.

I am even going to be writing myself in those empty Arabian afternoons. Have indeed put a few preparatory words down on paper already. This in absolute confidence; I haven't told her yet. But it's one of the many complex reasons why I decided to settle for Abu Dhabi.

I believe I see that right eyebrow of yours sardonically deployed. I believe I sense, about three inches behind the eyebrow, a tiny surge of jealousy and panic.

Is this the long-awaited study of narrative from Gilgamesh to "The Golden Bowl," you ask. No, it isn't. A rather unpleasant suspicion strikes you. It's not the long-awaited critical study of *her*? You plainly know little about me if you think I would use my reverence for her work to score some kind of personal point.

I'll give you a clue. This letter, it occurs to me, is a kind of simple first attempt at the form I am working toward. The dialogue between myself and J.L. so meticulously recorded above, for instance. You must have wondered as you read it. How was I able to reproduce it so fully? Had I made a shorthand note at the time? Did I have a tape recorder concealed beneath the kitchen table? The suspicion must have come to you, as someone in the literary business, that I was giving my recollections a little extra substance and definition.

You still haven't grasped, though, how radical my treatment of the problem was. I didn't improve on things: I just made the whole damn thing up from start to finish. We never had any such conversation. The entire dialogue is a kind of metaphor for the rather complex events that actually occurred—the process of guess and counter-guess, of glimpses over her shoulder when I took her cups of coffee she hadn't asked for, of silences and frowns, of looks and glances, of an accusatory tilt of the jaw here, a defensive set to the mouth there.

R. MacMillan

Your expression changes. You are beginning to feel, I do believe, some slight embarrassment on my behalf. Exactly. Fiction. Just when she is trying to find her way out of it, I am trying to find my way into it.

I don't mean, do I (and here your voice goes down a tone and a half), that I am . . . *writing a novel*? So what if I am? What's wrong with writing a novel?

I mean, come on. Never—not once in all my thirty-seven years—have I given way before. I know you've got some shameful seedy manuscript hidden away somewhere down there in Melbourne, though you've never had the courage to admit it to me. This may be my last chance before I die, and I'm not going to be put off by the sight of a few faint mocking smiles on the other side of the world. Nor by the fact that *she* happens to be occupying the fortress already. Actually, it was she who put it into my mind to try. The flaws in her new book, that I can see and no one else can—they suddenly seemed to me to offer a way through and under the mighty ramparts of literature. It came to me that I could squeeze my way through those unremarked cracks and take the fortress from within. Watching her at work, in any case, has rather radicalized me. I don't see why the great castle of fiction should remain the exclusive preserve of the privileged few. I don't see why it shouldn't be made over to the National Trust, and thrown open to the populace at large. It's a trade, writing, that anyone can learn, not a Masonic mystery. Part of my aim is to demonstrate that any bloody fool can do it.

Not, you note, that I've agreed it *is* a novel. It may be. It may not be. I don't know. It's a whatever-it-is. It's a something-or-other. She's not the only one who's licensed to hunt literary forms. It's going to be very strange, I can tell you that. And deep.

I'll tell you something else about

it. It will be good. It may be very good.

I believe I can see how it's done. That's what's changed. I believe I can see the trick.

Just possibly, if it proves too difficult to check on the citizens of Sowerby from the remoteness of the Persian Gulf, *she* will end up lecturing about *my* work.

SO, here we are, basking beneath the blazing Abu Dhabi postmark.

I'm sorry for the long summer of silence, but you can imagine what desperate packings occupied our lives, what desperate unpackings again to retrieve things prematurely packed, what form-fillings and cupboard-emptyings, what rendings of the heart, what rentings of the house, what injections and dejections, what forwardings and backwardings, what helpful briefings, what unhelpful longings, what second thoughts and first impressions.

Anyway, now we are beginning to come out of shock, and to discover that here is where we are, and have been for some time, and evermore shall be. And the first thing you will want to know is, what's it like?

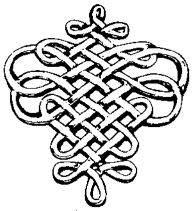
I will tell you what it's like in one colorful paragraph.

It's like an air-conditioned, viewless, well-soundproofed office halfway down a long empty corridor in a largely uninhabited new concrete building; this quiet retreat shared with a tall, thin man from Omaha, Nebraska, who has tall, thin religious beliefs, and teaches English Drama 1500-1970. This tall, thin man (will you believe the wild tale from Araby I am about to unfold?) regards Dr. Szoff both as the world's greatest authority on fiction and as one of the only two conversational resources we have in common. The other one is his good friend Vladimir, in Chicago. Vladimir is Professor Katc, more familiar to you and me and the rest of the civilized world as Vlad the Impaler. Actually this *is* an Arab story, it occurs to me—it's the one about the bloke who meets Death in Damascus and flees to Samarra, not knowing that all he will achieve by it is to provide John O'Hara with the title for a book. But the cost of fate these days in terms of precious jet fuel! It's had to bring me and my tall, thin portent from Omaha (who does look strikingly like Death, now I come to think about it) an aggregate of some eleven thousand miles to reach our fearful appointment here.

No, I'm carping. Half my life, after all, I spend not in my air-conditioned, viewless, well-soundproofed office at all, but in my air-conditioned, viewless, well-soundproofed house, which I share with a much more congenial colleague. Relations between J.L. and me (I can now confess to you) were becoming a little tense back home, and the move here has cleared the air. I think getting her away from my family has helped. Also the fact that I'm working on a book myself. (Did I tell you I'd started something that may or may not be a work of fiction? I see a sardonic eyebrow lift off the launchpad down there in Melbourne . . . Oh, yes, I did tell you.) So instead of spending the evenings fretting in the living room, feeling abandoned, I'm softly clicking away at the electronics in the spare bedroom. While *she* frets in the living room. No, no, she usually works in the evenings, too. Parcelling up my family. I've even become resigned to that. I rather welcome it. I like to think of her sitting in her room with her head full of Auntie Annie, while I sit on the other side of the wall with my head full of . . . whatever it is full of. A mystery, which shall be revealed unto you in due course. You are going to be rather surprised, I think. And I'll tell you the great secret I've discovered: Anyone can do it, even me. It's like making love, or all the other things that look so fearful until you actually try them. It's like free-fall parachuting. *How* do you do it? You just do it. You step out of the plane, that's all, and there you are, doing it.

To be absolutely honest, I like it here, in spite of my tall, thin friend. It's so clean. I mean clean of people, clean of all their tedious talk. They don't have agents here, or publishers. No old friend of hers with space to fill in a failing literary magazine lives within three thousand miles of this place; no film producer has yet realized there are telephones here; organizers of petitions probably have their hands cut off. All those bluebottles buzzing in one's ear—"Would she could she might she . . . speak write judge sign stand come go . . . consider decide review advise"—have faded to the soothing hum of the air-conditioner.

Not even the publication of her book disturbed that beguiling soft murmur. The day came; nothing happened; the day went. A few reviews began to



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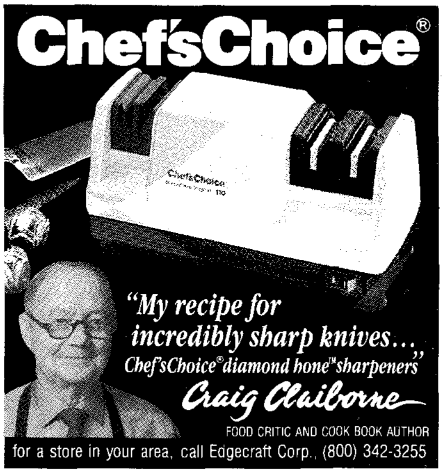
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arrive, as thin and unreal as the airmail paper they were printed on. They were full of praise, but the shouting was in another street. She read them; I read them; the air-conditioner hummed. "Good," I would say. "Very good. Well done. Congratulations." Mmmmmmmmmm, said the air-conditioner judicially. She would tap her teaspoon against her cup, or look, from force of habit, at the view out of the window, which was of course of the inside of the shutters, and say nothing at all. None of the reviewers seemed to have noticed anything amiss about the book. None of them seemed to think it should have had some kind of ironic framework. I was no more disgruntled by this than she was gratified. Perhaps I had been wrong. Perhaps there had been nothing wrong with it after all. Perhaps it is the perfect book, as perfect as only far-off things can be.

I've just realized, as I describe to you our life here, what it is I like most of all about it. That it's a fiction. A fiction written in an unfamiliar language of concrete and chilled air—and a fiction written by someone else. This is its great charm. We are living in someone else's house and sitting on someone else's furniture. We are ruled by someone else's government, which someone else has to reform or remove or endure. We are breathing someone else's air. No wonder I feel free here. No wonder I can write my own fiction. I have, after all, given my life to the study of this strange intoxicant, and have at last been pickled in it, the way drinkers in songs hope to end up pickled in alcohol. I have been taken up, like a desert father after a lifetime's contemplation of God, to become one with the object of my devotion.

Oh yes. My tall, thin friend tells me that someone is collecting J.L.'s letters. Not the mighty Vladimir, as we all supposed—it was Vladimir who told him—but some newcomer we have never heard of, some still unformed young pipsqueak scarcely out of graduate school, with one of those still unformed names, like Rhees, or Timmins, or Dubby. He is said to be writing a critical study of J.L. Which of course is good news—the more the merrier. Delighted to welcome a fresh challenger to the lists, etc. But why does he want her *letters*? You don't need letters to write a critical study. I think he has his sights on something biographical. Some fawning piece of P.R. done with the subject's consent, or else some piece of scandalmongering done without. Or perhaps he is putting his marker down for when the great standard life is commissioned in years to come.

Well, we've all got careers to carve. But I suppose he'll be trying to get his hands on *my* letters, too, since I'm part of the story. I assume you'd mention it if he approached you. I mean, you'd *refuse*, of course. Wouldn't you? Perhaps you wouldn't. Perhaps I am addressing not just you but Mr. Phelps or Mr. Timmins and all posterity. I'd better start putting footnotes in, explaining who people are. You do understand, don't you, that not everything I say is to be taken literally? I'm sure you do. You can read, can't you, between these somewhat inconsequential lines, all the good things I never mention, all the tenderness I have felt toward the subject of your researches, all the security I have given her? You can see that it was for her good as much as mine that I brought her out here? Too much contentment and gardening can undermine a writer. She needed shaking up. She loves it as much as I do. All right? Got that transcribed? This *is* the kind of thing you want to know, is it? You're not hoping to find out how often we make love? I know what you scholars are like.

Well, I mustn't ramble on forever, or I shall miss the post . . .

No, I know. I'll tell you about a small but significant experience I had here the other day. It was something that (I think) captured something of the heat and colorfulness of Abu Dhabi, but which also elicited in me a rather important feeling about life, as these little incidents tend to do in poems and letters written by people making academic visits to exotic locations.

Picture, if you will, then, the empty, sunbaked street at midday, as I drive back to our housing development on the outskirts of town for lunch. I am at the wheel of the small air-conditioned car that comes as part of the job, with nothing to be seen through the green-tinted windscreen but blinding white empty roadway, when suddenly a little dusty motorcycle shoots out of nowhere in front of my wheels. I brake, the motorcyclist swerves wildly, loses his balance, and goes down in a storm of swirling djellabah. I scramble out of the car into the midday furnace, already seeing the casualty ward—the morgue—the prison where I am awaiting execution. The motorcyclist picks himself out of the dust, though, plainly alive but extremely voluble. He is pointing at the roadway, a widening area of which is now no longer dusty white but dark and gleaming. Blood! No, not blood, because he is not bleeding—he is indicating, forcibly, the emptiness of a large open tin can, labelled in English "Snow Queen powdered-milk substitute—catering pack," which he had been cradling like a son in front of him as he rode, shaded in the folds of his djellabah. Powdered-milk substitute? Can powdered-milk substitute be dark and wet and gleaming?

Anne Burgess

A small crowd appears out of the noonday emptiness. We all stand around in the hard iron heat, I hopelessly gesturing apology, they gazing at the gleaming patch in the road as if it were a television screen, eagerly discussing (I assume) its appearance and provenance, and lamenting its fate. And suddenly I understand. I have spilled something more precious than blood or powdered-milk substitute. I have spilled *water*.

This little incident, I think, makes a succinct and colorful point about the importance and preciousness of water in a desert economy. But to me it suggested something else as well. Because by the time the crowd had dispersed, and the motorcyclist had dusted himself down, the wet patch on the road had ceased to exist. In those few minutes under the noonday sun it had lost first its gloss and then its dark wetness. It had become nothing but a faintly coastlined whiteness in the whiteness all around. And suddenly I thought, that's not just a story about water. That's a story about me. I could disappear off the face of the earth here just as easily, and leave as little trace behind.

We both could. I told J.L. about the incident over lunch, and explained the feeling it had elicited. She looked thoughtful. I think the story could be used, in an otherwise rather underdocumented section of some future biography, to suggest, albeit obliquely, her state of mind at the time.

Our life here is a pure fiction, as precious and evanescent as water. That's my point.

Got that, Boggs?

No, but seriously, I should be grateful to be reassured that my letters are still safely filed away inside that antproof steel filing cabinet down there.

YOU didn't answer my question. Five fascinating pages about Charles' amusing difficulties pronouncing the word "Mörike" and the amusing hugeness of your wife's belly—for all of which news I of course thank you—but not a syllable about whether you have been approached by Mr. Fillis. Perhaps you didn't realize that my question was serious. Perhaps I got the name wrong—it's a name which is very easy to get wrong. Or perhaps you have already given him my letters—*sold* him them. I hope you stood out for a good price and dare not mention it.

Let me say in so many words that I am writing this in a humorous tone of voice. Some people apparently find it difficult to tell. If the humor sounds a little edgy it's because I'm a shade sensitive about unanswered questions just at the moment. You see, I don't believe it was news to J.L. that Mr. Fillis was writing this so-called critical study. I believe she knew about it already. I believe she *authorized* it. I put this to her, in a humorous tone of voice, and she declined to answer. She declined to answer, she said, on principle. What principle is that, I asked, humorously. Her right to conduct her professional life as she saw fit, she said. Didn't she realize, I asked, no less humorously, that I was asking in a humorous tone of voice? No, she didn't, she said. Well, I was, I assured her. So, she replied, it wasn't a serious question? Yes, I confirmed, it was a very serious question indeed—it was a serious question asked in a humorous tone of voice.

At this point she gave up all pretense of arguing reasonably. "You own the questions," she said, "but you don't own the answers."

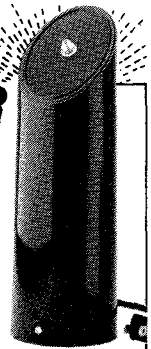
It was yesterday evening when she made this rather strange pronouncement. We were standing in the entrance hall of the house—I was just about to go back to the university to give an evening lecture. The hall is nine feet long by five feet wide, so we were very close to each other, and there was no room to move about, or gesture, or shout. She was speaking very quietly. I imagine I was smiling.

"Your professional life is a matter of some professional interest to *me*," I said, as lightly as before. "*Your* professional life is *my* professional life, if you recall."

She began to speak very oddly. We had spoken very little for several weeks, and she may have got out of practice. She spoke very levelly and seriously, which is not how married couples normally speak to each other, and in curiously literary phrases. "You have led me into a desolate and stony place," she said, "and things are very bad between us. You hedge me about, you cage me and patrol me, and take all the ground and air from around me. But you don't own the words I say or the thoughts I think, and you never will, and you never can."

I'm not absolutely certain she said "hedge me about," if the exact words are important for the record. It may have been "fence me in," or "mew me up." I realized that an important declaration was being made, but there was no chance to take a note, or rush for the tape recorder. She was staring at me over the top of her spectacles without blinking, in the way she used to in our first months together. I could think of no reply, I regret to say. It didn't occur to me to ask her why she had agreed to come with me to this stony place, if she was so free, or why she stayed now she had discovered its desolation. If only she had put her foot down firmly enough, for that matter, I should never have come myself. But then I suppose the stoniness she was complaining about stretched well beyond the boundaries of the United Arab Emirates.

So I stood my ground and stared smilingly back at her. She went on gazing at me. She looked more sad than angry. I wondered whether to put my arms round her, but went on smiling instead. The air-conditioner murmured. There seemed to be no reason why this period of human history, with her gazing sadly at me and me smiling fixedly at her, should ever end. But



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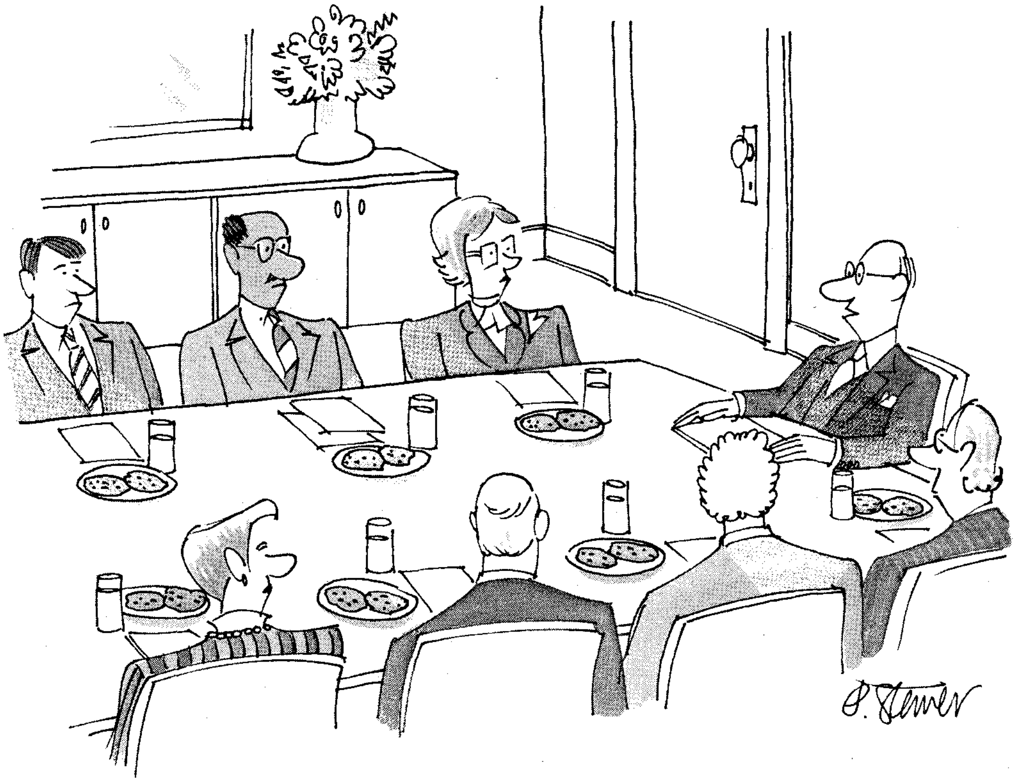

"In accordance with the by-laws of this corporation, you get all the milk you want but only two cookies each."

• •

then she sighed, and went into the kitchen. I continued on my way out through the front door, and got into the car. I turned on the air-conditioner and sat there, unable to think where I was supposed to be going. My hands were shaking.

So you see I am not in the mood for unanswered questions at the moment. Being here is like one of those experiments in sensory deprivation you read about, where the subjects go mad and start to hallucinate. The whole familiar world is blotted out by sand and distance. I seize upon little snippets of information in the airmail edition and the literary journals—allusions to events I haven't heard about, incomprehensible jokes, strange unexplained names—and build great monsters from them. Fillis, for example. *Fillis!* There's no one in this whole world called Fillis! I invented him. I misread the name. I misunderstood the joke. Fillis . . . And is he writing a critical study or isn't he? Perhaps it's merely a critical article. A review. A shorter notice. Nothing.

No, I know what happened. He phoned her one day. He was a voice from home, a voice from the old life. And he sounded young and vulnerable—just starting out in his career—in need of a helping hand. She felt she couldn't say no. He was another of her sons. A Mark III son. The first batch have fallen by the wayside (one of them's running a junk stall, you know, the other's a meat porter). Then the replacement she got for them (that's me) went on the blink. And now here was this nice young man on the line, bounced charmingly off a satellite at her, the way all the best narrative fiction is going to be in the future. Sons—that's what she wants. She thinks she knows how to get on with sons. This is why the husbands don't work out. The first one never was a son—that was what was wrong with him. The second one was, but then he grew up, and took a critical look at her and her work, and tried to collaborate with her as an equal. A terrible mistake.

Why does this Fillis man need authorization from her to write "a critical study"? For the same reason that he needs to collect her letters, of course. The "critical study" is going to grow, one way or another, into a biography, just as I knew it would. How does he know I'm not writing a biography myself? I'm the obvious candidate for the job, aren't I? If for no other job in the world. So who has told him I'm not doing it? Not me. Not you. That only leaves her. And then again, *if* I'm not, *why* aren't I? Doesn't he ever stop to ask himself that very simple question? Doesn't he see that I don't do it because a life of the living can't be done? Not a true life. Not without the grossest violation of the subject's feelings. And if he doesn't see, why doesn't he ring me up and ask me? Why's he nervous of getting in touch with *me?*

Or perhaps he's not going to do a life of the living. Perhaps he's just circling overhead, waiting for her to die. Then he's going to be all ready to swoop. I don't suppose it will worry him overmuch if I'm still alive. I'll get eaten along with the rest, like all the other worms in the carrion. Before I can write a truthful memoir of my own I shall have been pilloried and discredited already.

And if I'm not very careful most of the material is going to come out of my own letters! That's what hurts. Look, has he approached you or hasn't he? I must know. I must have a definite answer. You may be able to reassure me; I may be suffering quite needless anxiety. But whether he has or whether he hasn't, I want you to do something for me. A small and simple thing. I want you to destroy all my letters.

Do I sound a little mad? I am, I am. When I think of that first night in the guest room . . . When I think of running insanely into town to send her the flowers—of walking up and down the street outside her door, willing her to come out—of putting my arm round her the day that woman smashed up her house, of making her Ovaltine and feeding it to her in a spoon, of all the love and goodness between us, of how happy we were . . . well, then, yes—I *am* mad. I am, I am.

That's why I want those letters destroyed. To protect *her*. To stop her from being seen at moments when she was unseen by anyone but me, when she was undefended. I don't want to be used as a keyhole for peeping in at her.

To protect me, too, though. I don't want people thinking I've used her just to write myself into the record, to give myself some foothold in existence by becoming part of her history.

In fact, I want those letters destroyed for both our sakes. It's a chance to expunge our lives. Our lives are not what we meant, not what we meant at all. This is our chance to unlive them, to strike them from the record.

The only memorial to my life on this earth is going to be my book. How can I write it in the midst of all this, though? I sit at my desk, and I'm deafened by the air-conditioner. All I can think about is how my life—and hers, and hers!—is being stolen by someone who understands nothing about either of us. While on the other side of the wall she works on, apparently unaffected. Writing about my family, without any reference to me. But they're changing, my poor family, out here in the heat. They're growing *stories*, like moldy bread growing fur. She's finding explanations for the way they are and the things they did. She's giving them pasts she never knew, inner lives she could never observe.

And don't think I'm creeping into her room like a spy, snuffling through her papers. I don't need to. I know it from looking at her. Because I know *her* inner life, all right. I watch her across the table every day and I know every thought that's passing through her head. That's why the idea of Mr. Fillis writing about her makes me laugh. If only he knew what I know he'd laugh at himself.

She's *naming* my mother in there. I felt a flash of pure shame when I saw that, as if I'd opened a door and caught my mother naked. Her first name—her surname. She spares us nothing. I won't repeat them—I don't want to embarrass myself further. Why am I so shy about proper names? For a good old structuralist reason. Because they are uniquely arbitrary signs. They could be anything. Fillis could be Figgis could be Figgin could be Biggin could be Mewle. They are fictions. Their naked gratuitousness is not cloaked by common usage. Their harsh particularity is not softened by generalization. I admire the ancient Israelites, who had seven names for God, and uttered none of them. I remember telling you once (I'm sure you've forgotten) about my sister, who died at the age of four. I didn't tell you her name. I've never uttered it to my mother, either, nor she to me. And the word "father," following immediately after the word "my," I still find difficult even to think.

Listen, this is my mother, as captured on the famous hundred-gram Conqueror bond: "She goes fearfully to the window, and looks fearfully out, pressing her fingers to her lips; sits down at the table once more; goes fearfully back to the window, again and again, like a small nervous stiff-legged gray bird moving back and forth between a crumb of bread and flight."

When I read that I felt as if my mother were alive again and moving back and forth in front of me, in all her old anguish. It was as shameful as hearing her named. Why should people have the right to exhume the dead like this? To expose them to view? To start pain and recognition in the living?

Like a small nervous stiff-legged gray bird . . . I may have misquoted. I'm relying on memory, not a photocopier. And then she was *inside* my mother. She knew *why* my mother kept going to the window. "She thinks she can hear footsteps over the noise of the traffic and the children playing. She hopes they might be her son's; knows they are not; believes they may be news of him; fears it is bad news. But there is nothing to be seen; only the children playing and the traffic passing, only the weather and wind, only God and his universe; nothing."

Sons again, you see. And such nonsense. Her Omniscient Majesty doesn't know what went on inside my mother's head. Her guess is no better than mine, which is that it wasn't fear for me she was holding in with those four thin fingers pressed against her lips—it was some nebulous nameless dread she couldn't even have identified herself. Why should anyone have the right to break into my mother and steal her away from her? To break into me, and steal my mother away from me? "She thinks she can hear footsteps . . ." What evidence, what application, could those words have now except the guilty sense of recognition they might arouse in me? A recognition which I most certainly don't feel. All I feel is that I wish I hadn't read them.

Two pages further on she was not only inside the house but opening the safe—she was back into my mother's past. Back to a winter's night when my mother was nineteen, nearly twenty

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years before I was born, when she was a pretty girl running home from work through the fog "with the corner of her blue scarf held over her mouth, and November diamonds sparkling in her hair." And suddenly the tears came to my eyes. It was the blueness of the scarf that did it. So stupid. There never was such a scarf, or such a night. They were made-up things. And yet somehow I was glad to find my mother young again, running along the street, with a home to run to, and a blue scarf, and the droplets of fog caught in her hair. Was it my mother I was weeping for, or the words? It was the way the words caught her, the way they honored her, like sunlight haloing and honoring a cloud.

So I *was* creeping into the great queen's room, then, and looking at the papers on her desk? Once. Only once. In desperation, because I was slightly mad, from the mad struggles I was having next door, trying to write my own book, hurling words and more words down onto the paper, and hitting nothing, *naming* nothing. I wasn't trying to find out what she was doing—I knew what she was doing. I just didn't know how she was doing it. After all these years I still had not the slightest idea how the conjuring trick was done. And this time I'd seen the whole performance going on right in front of my eyes—that's what maddened me. In slow motion. Month by month, nothing hidden. It wasn't like the novels, where probably it was all done with secret wires to her childhood and concealed tubes to her unconscious. I'd seen the aunts and mothers put in—I'd seen the words taken out. So simple!

But how had the one turned into the other? I was trying to find some bit of apparatus that might give it away—notes, drafts, I didn't know what. I found notes, I found drafts. And of course they explained nothing, just as I'd known they wouldn't. I may be mad, but I'm not a fool.

I've been watching her for more than four years, and I've seen everything. But the essential bit—the gadget that makes it all work, the crystal, the chip, the formula, the dodge, the wheeze, the scam, the flick of the wrist, the twist of the fingers, the whatever-it-is—*that* remains as invisible as the peacocks' tongues at her banquet.

So I only looked the once. Once was enough for me to catch myself up. And then of course she was out only once. The rest of the time she's been in there. Working—that's all she knows how to do, poor love.

Do you know where I'd like to be at the moment? It's just come to me with great force. I'd like to be walking along Dirac Drive, looking at the back of Machine Intelligence. I used to think it was the dullest road and the ugliest building in all creation. I was wrong.

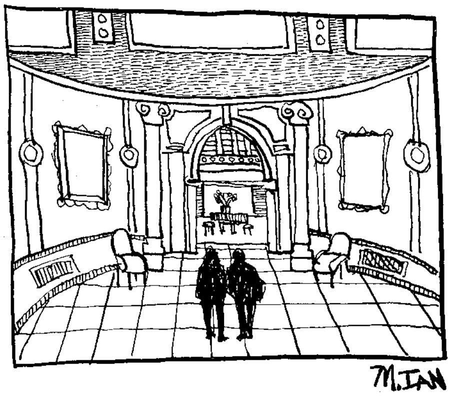
Don't worry about me. I'm only mad in private, talking to you. The rest of the time I'm as calm as an air-conditioner. I'm still teaching her, of course. I think they were hoping for Dickens and Galsworthy, but what they're getting is her. As always.

So don't worry. Just burn the letters—and send me the ashes. Put all thought of the photocopier out of your mind, incidentally. You see how suspicious I'm getting. But, truly, if you even think of photocopying them first I shall *know*, and God will know, and one or the other of us will strike you dead.

And make *particularly* sure this letter goes up with the rest. What's in the others I can't remember—probably nothing so very damaging—but Fillis could obviously have a field day with this one.

So—BY RETURN—AIRFREIGHT—IN A CASKET—THE ASHES OF MY LIFE!

AM I the only man left alive? Have these blinding deserts and shimmering salt seas reached out and devoured the old green world beyond? I've phoned you five times. Nothing. No one. I've cabled you twice. No reply but the huge silent roar of the air-conditioner. So here I am reduced to sending another letter hurrying off through the wilderness, trying impossibly to overtake the letter I wrote yesterday. Who knows, perhaps the first one is still lying unopened on your doormat. Or perhaps by some freak of the postal weather this one will catch up, and come galloping out of the distance just in time, nostrils wide and flanks foaming, thundering into the prison yard even as the rifles are raised, shouting:



DON'T!

destroy the letters.

I asked you to destroy all my letters to you. Don't.

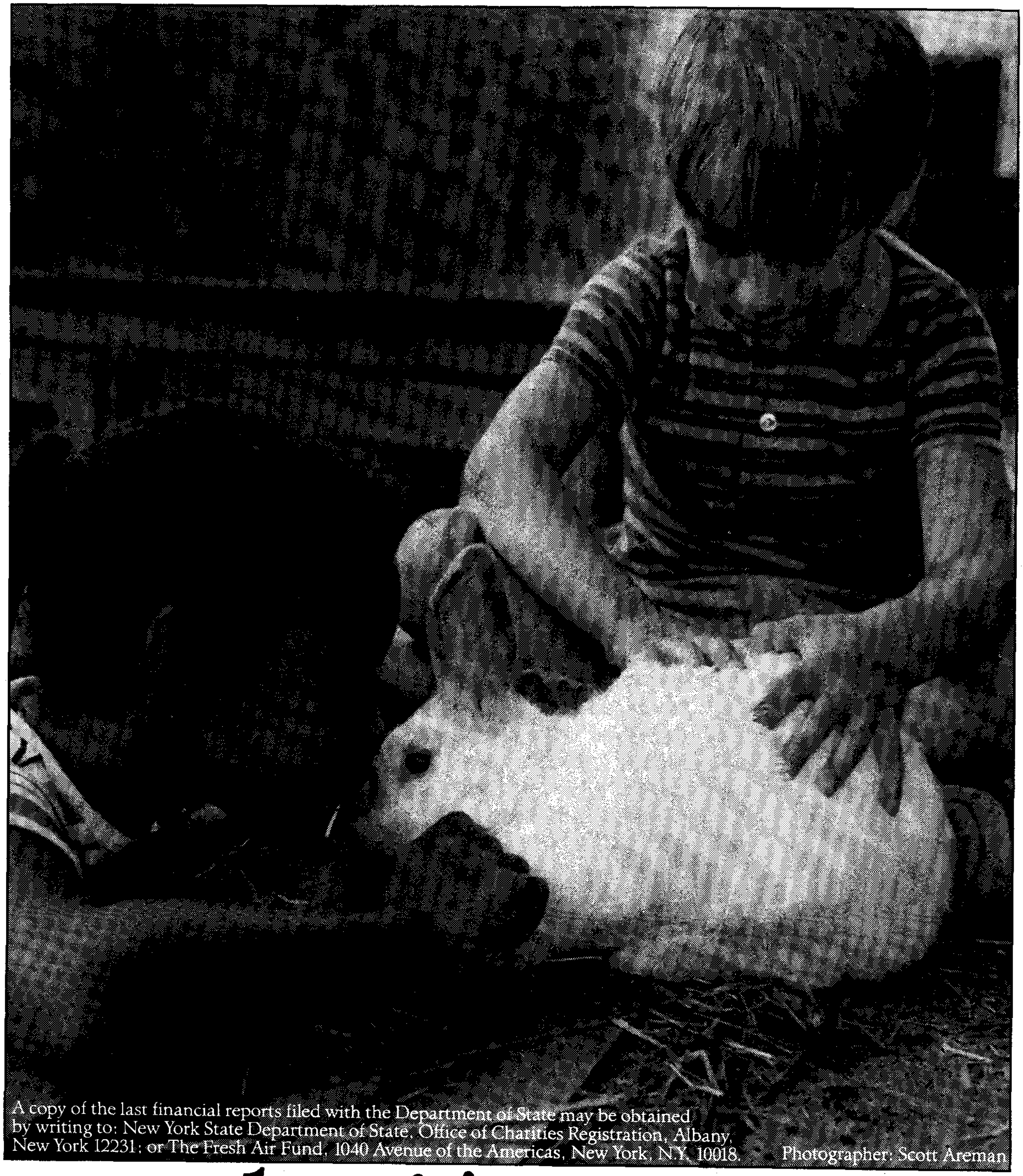
Don't.

I thought about it all night. Walked up and down the living room, sat at my desk, dozed in an armchair. It all came fizzing up inside my head like some monstrous Alka-Seltzer. Then it settled again, until around 6 A.M. the contents of my head were as flat and calm as a glass of water. I turned off the air-conditioner and opened the shutters. The whole world was as still as I was. The air was almost cool. Out over the desert in the west the sky was translucent gray, as gentle as purring pigeons; out over the Gulf in the east the most discreet lemon, the most intimate pink. I stood there waiting for the sun to rise, and I suddenly realized that I had the four fingers of my right hand pressed against my mouth, just like my mother in J.L.'s book. The only difference was that the sunrise I was waiting for was impersonal and inevitable, a mere wordplay on the rare and private sonrise for which she was longing. Words and echoes of words—this was all I had. I understood quite plainly as I stood there what I couldn't understand yesterday, in the hugeness of my indignation. A sad and simple thing. That those letters to you are all that remains of my life.

I've lost her, I know that. She's in there working now, but great deserts and empty seas lie between us. She's as desolate as I am, I know. Or she would be, if she didn't have the book. That's why she's so obsessed with it. Because it's a world where I am not, a world I have vacated, a world I am not to be allowed even to survey. That's one of the things she said that night: "I won't be told where I'm allowed to go. I won't be told what I'm allowed to think. I won't be made to defend myself for going where I go and doing what I do."

And that's connected with another thing. She's never accepted what *I* do; she's always despised my trade. Well, for a start I think she was amused that

It may not be pulling a rabbit out of a hat,



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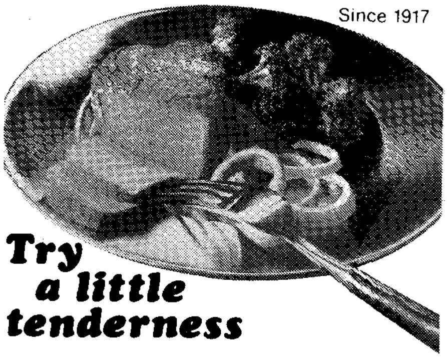

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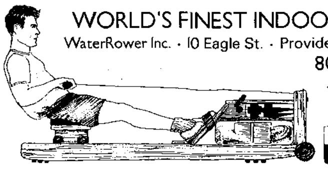

True Water Resistance · Solid North American Cherry

I wrote and lectured about her works—was even slightly flattered, though she never read a word of what I wrote. But the amusement settled into contempt, and the flattery into distaste. And when she spurned my trade she spurned me. What else did I have in the world? What was I but that?

Now even that's gone. My job here is unskilled labor. I might have fought harder not to lose my old employment if she hadn't so devalued it.

I suppose that's why I started the book. To have something. To have something that even she might recognize as something. Did I tell you I was writing a book? Strike it from the record if I did, because it's no longer true. I put it out in the dustbin during the night.

Actually, it never was true. I discovered this at about 3:15 A.M. One of the skills of my late trade, which I haven't yet forgotten, is to distinguish between a novel and a stack of wastepaper. This particular specimen, I discovered to my surprise and amusement, when I actually read it through, was an example of the latter. I hadn't worked on it for some weeks, in any case. How could I? To write a book you have to be obsessive. You have to be prepared to destroy everything around you. As she is. As I am not. This is another thing I discovered about myself as I stood at the window, breathing the slightly cooler air off the Gulf and watching the sun come up: I am sane. I may be a fool, but I'm not mad.

I've touched fire, and been burned by it. Burned out of house and home. Stripped and skinned by the flames. But not consumed. Not quite.

I was a cocky little fellow, wasn't I? I don't feel so cocky anymore.

The only thing that keeps her here, I think, is the book. She has to finish it before she can look for another life. This is her madness. When the fit passes she will go.

Quite funny, really. She's abandoning me for my mother. Perhaps this will insure me a foothold in the world's footnotes.

So all that remains of my life is the letters. As long as the letters exist I have a past and a present, and a trace of all the happiness that my old maj and I had together will remain. I want you to make a photocopy of them and send it to me. Make two photocopies—make three. Put them in different places, so that they can't all be washed away in the same flood or hit by the same thunderbolt. I'll make copies of the copy you send to me, and put them in safes and bank vaults. Something of me is going to survive.

I've just rung your number yet again. Teatime in Melbourne, and still no answer. So it looks as if this letter really is my only chance to deliver the reprieve. I'll get it to you in time somehow. I'll airfreight it—I'll fax it—I'll charter a private jet. From the depths of my newfound sanity I feel insanely certain it will arrive in time to save my life. All will be well.

Let the record stand. Let my life stand, let all our lives stand. This is the message of my serenity. Why should we start crossing ourselves out and rewriting? What we are is all we have.

So stet. Stet.

The phone. It's you. I *know* it . . .

Yes. Well. Twenty-five minutes gone by since I wrote the last paragraph. The first five of them, after I put the phone down, I spent gazing blankly at the blank wall in front of me, unable to think or feel anything. The last twenty I have spent walking up and down my room making such insane noises that my future ex-wife even broke off her labors next door to come and investigate. I think she thought I was having a heart attack, or some kind of gross psychotic breakdown. "What is it?" she demanded, irritated at the interruption. I shook my head helplessly. I couldn't explain. I couldn't even stop laughing. When she realized that these terrible gasps and groans represented mirth she went away again, even more irritated. Laughter is not her mode, poor love.

Because it *was* you on the phone. Precisely as I foretold. Or almost precisely. It was your words but not your voice; your cable, read over to me by the local operator.

"LETTERS LOST." I shall remember that brief alliterative phrase as long as I live.

Human destiny, in two words. It really is perfect. I sit up all night in the agony of my soul, trying to decide whether to burn my life or not—and then I find there's no life there to burn. It's been put in the wrong folder—thrown out with the old newspapers—eaten by dingoes. I suppose it's gone for good. I've suddenly dissolved. I've become as invisible as other people's thoughts. But then possibly it hasn't gone for good. Just as the courts finally agree to presume it dead, it will turn up again, like some embarrassing ne'er-do-well relative. In bits, probably, wrapped round someone's grandmother's crystal goblets. Or in Mr. Fillis's burgeoning files. Who knows? Not you, evidently. Not me. No one. My life is in the hands of God, just where religion teaches us it is.

"LETTERS LOST." It really is a wonderful opening sentence. And when I'd at last stopped laughing at that I started all over again at the next sentence: "SO NO PROBLEM." And then again at the last sentence: "FREDERICK LESCOTT PENDLE GEORGE BORN 1 P.M., 7 LB. 7 OZ." So that's where you were when I was trying to phone you. How ironical. Having dropped the remains of my life down the back of the radiator, you were at the hospital bringing the next one into the world. Don't file poor little Frederick Lescott Pendle George away with your old lecture notes, will you? You can be filed away yourself for that kind of mistake.

Well, congratulations. You're down there extending human life into the future; J.L.'s next door extending it back into the past; I've scarcely got a hold of any life at all, even mine, even here and now.

It's like that Arab's can of water. You balance your life hugely and awkwardly in front of you as you go along. It seems so important—you can't think of anything else. Then suddenly some stranger comes bowling down the street—someone who hasn't even seen this huge and secret load you're carrying. You lose your balance—and there's your life in the road, already disappearing in the sun. Though rather more of a crowd than I've managed to attract gathered to watch that water evaporate.

Anyway, I'd better post this latest installment off. Scatter the pages in the wind when you've read them—give them a sporting chance.

—MICHAEL FRAYN

• •

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A volunteer, a Daughter of the Confederacy,
receives my admission and points the way.
Here are gray jackets with holes in them,
red sashes with individual flourishes,
things soft as flesh. Someone sewed
the gold silk cord onto that gray sleeve
as if embellishments
could keep a man alive.

I have been reading "War and Peace,"
and so the particulars of combat
are on my mind—the shouts and groans
of men and boys, and the horses' cries
as they fall, astonished at what
has happened to them.
                                        Blood on leaves,
blood on grass, on snow: extravagant
beauty of red. Smoke, dust of disturbed
earth; parch and burn.

Who would choose this for himself?
And yet the terrible machinery
waited in place. With Psalters
in their breast pockets, and gloves
knitted by their sisters and sweethearts,
the men in gray hurled themselves
out of the trenches and rushed against
blue. It was what both sides
agreed to do.

—JANE KENYON

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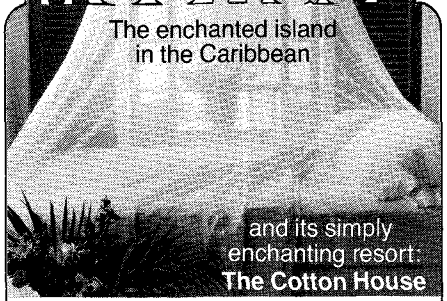

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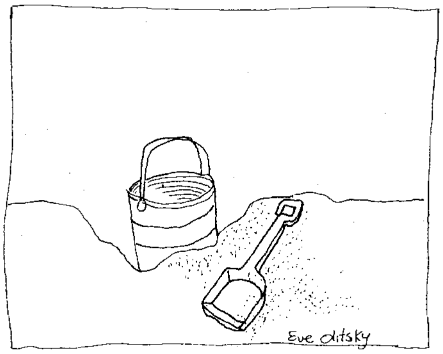
LETTER FROM BEIJING

AUGUST 2

AMONG the efforts that the authorities here have recently been congratulating themselves on is their campaign to clear away battle scars from the city's streets. So far, according to the Beijing *Daily*, nearly thirteen thousand metres of metal fencing and nearly ten thousand metal-and-concrete road dividers have been repaired or replaced, and so have a hundred police booths and unspecified numbers of signals and road signs. The estimate of the cost of the necessary materials alone is five million yuan, or about $1.3 million, and the work, which began on June 5th, the day after the People's Liberation Army fought its way to Tiananmen Square, required more than a month and is now substantially complete. Today, the only visible signs of the recent "counter-revolutionary rebellion" are unrepaired off-street bullet holes in windows and walls (the façade of the Beijing Concert Hall appears to have been particularly favored as a target of armor-piercing gunfire), and the incongruous sight at principal intersections and on Tiananmen Square of soldiers standing guard with automatic rifles under multicolored beach umbrellas. Even the banners and wreaths that for a month marked the sites of clashes where soldiers died have been replaced by signs like one near my office at Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, which a colleague has translated for me: "Happily, happily we go to work. Safely, safely we come home."

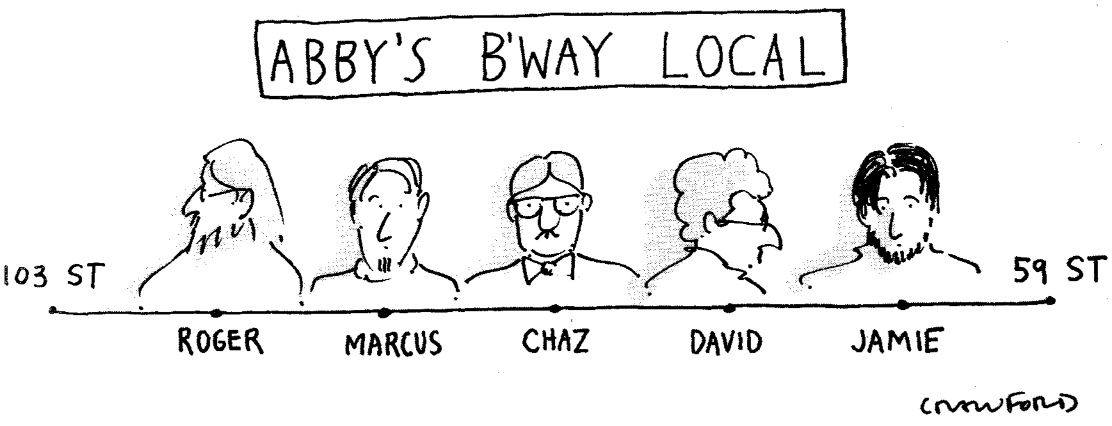
Unfortunately, China has not been content to stop at cosmetic coverups of damage from what the *People's Daily* was the first to call "the turmoil." (The term was subsequently sanctioned for use by Senior Leader Deng Xiaoping.) Arrests of dissidents and of scholars and intellectuals considered to be dissidents continue. They are no longer announced, or displayed on evening television broadcasts, but on July 13th the Voice of America estimated their number at ten thousand, twenty-five hundred in Beijing alone. On July 10th, more than a month after the enforcement of martial law, a *People's Daily* editorial said that the nation "must thoroughly root out and punish according to law the plotters, organizers, and behind-the-scenes instigators of the riot and turmoil, ringleaders of illegal organizations, and criminal elements involved in the recent turmoil." Li Qiyan, the chief of Beijing's Communist Party apparatus, has also demanded "the thorough mopping up of counter-revolutionary rebels," some of whom, he said, are "still spreading rumors and poisoning minds." To facilitate the mopping up, identity checks are being required of those who seek to enter many of the city's buildings, or board trains, or travel on the highways. The public-security forces are manning telephone hot lines and have recently announced the installation in neighborhood centers of special boxes in which denunciations of "counter-revolutionary elements" can be deposited. And the Communist government is not overlooking the economic incentive: rewards are being offered—and publicized.

And now—inevitably, I suppose—we have the political purges. Former Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang has been stripped of all his titles except that of member of the Party, and he may lose it, too, and more, since the Party's Central Disciplinary Committee said on June 25th that it would "look further into his case." His replacement as Party Secretary is Jiang Zemin, who was the Party First Secretary in Shanghai and was noted for taking a particularly hard line against dissidents there. Also replaced on the Politburo was one of Zhao's principal supporters, Hu Qili. Du Daozhang, the director of the State Media and Publications Administration, may have been next—his dismissal, reported by Reuters but not yet confirmed, was said to be linked to his support for a journalists' appeal for negotiations with the students. Nor did their innovative use of the word "turmoil" save the jobs of the two top executives of the *People's Daily*—its director, Qian Liren, and its editor-in-chief, Tan Wenrui. They were succeeded by an administrator of the Communist Party school and by the former editor of the People's Liberation Army newspaper, the *Liberation Army Daily*. The remaining leaders of China's press were summoned to a seminar at the end of June and told to restudy "the tenets of Marxist journalism," and the success of the seminar, I suppose, is summed up in two headlines in recent issues of the official English-language *China Daily:* "Duties of Artists, Writers Are Set Out by the Party," and "Plenary Session Decisions Are Hailed by One and All."



There is reported to be a plan in the works calling for the arrest and punishment of not only the journalists who took part in demonstrations but those who actively reported them. So far, however, the only known arrests are of two reporters for the *People's Daily* and of Dai Qing, a prominent woman writer on the staff of the *Guangming Daily*, a newspaper for intellectuals. Dai was said to have been the author of a May 15th appeal which *Guangming* published and Du Daozhang signed. The punishments meted out to others in the press, radio, and television who have been found to have deviated in their reporting from Marxist tenets have not yet gone beyond suspensions from work and assignments to write extensive self-criticisms.

Ultimately, even those who played no part in the demonstrations—and may actually have opposed them—are to be subjected to "political education," which, Deng says, shouldn't apply "to schools and students alone but to the masses as a whole." Schools are being called back into summer sessions, and graduations delayed, for the study of Deng's speech, which has been printed, with other government and Party documents relating to the turmoil, and bound in little blue books. For more than a month now, these books, with others, have been the subjects of study at meetings of all Chinese work units, including my own, which are called so often and last so many hours that I wonder how anybody is getting any work done in Beijing. Apparently, nobody is, for the government announced early in July that it would have to cancel summer vacations to "make up for the losses caused by recent political unrest." "Now," a Chinese friend of mine said as he emerged from a meeting at which this was announced, "I have to go home and tell my little



daughter that the trip to Beidaihe"—Beijing's beach resort—"which is all she has been talking about for months, isn't going to be." Still more unfortunately for my friend's daughter, Beijing authorities have since announced plans for summer activities "to educate the youngsters in loving the Communist Party, Socialism, the Motherland, and the People's Liberation Army." Senior middle-school students, for example, "will be organized to study Deng Xiaoping's recent speeches and the communiqué of the fourth plenary session of the Thirteenth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party."

Of course, far more onerous—and tragic—consequences are being faced by those who have been arrested or purged. However, since the government publicized the news of twenty-seven executions in the weeks right after June 4th it has said little about those being investigated and confined. One exception is the case of Xiao Bing, a businessman, whose crime was to talk to a crew from ABC television. Poor Xiao didn't even have his moment on the American television screen—his highly emotional account of seeing thousands of casualties was cut by editors in New York—but public-security technicians took the footage off the network's satellite feed, and Xiao's picture was transmitted throughout China over the legend "If you see this man, tell the police." Two women did, and now Xiao, convicted of "spreading rumors" and "slandering the People's Liberation Army," has been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment. The two women are said to have received three-hundred-dollar rewards.

At least Xiao's family and friends know what has happened to him. The fate of most of the other thousands of "counter-revolutionaries" sought by police and the Army is not known; presumably, they have gone into hiding or simply "disappeared." Included in this category—for the time being, anyway—is the nineteen-year-old student who gained the attention and admiration of the world when, on June 5th, he was photographed standing alone in defiance of a tank column. He was identified by the *Sunday Express* of London as Wang Weilin, and is said to have appeared briefly on television in a group photograph of arrested "hooligans," but he has not been seen or heard from since. Also either hiding or "disappeared" is Wang Dan, a twenty-one-year-old Beijing University history major, who led the student movement in its final days. Although Wang was originally reported among those killed when the Army recaptured the square, a Taiwanese reporter arrested here July 3rd (and later expelled from the country) wrote that he had been entailed to a meeting with Wang Dan, and that police told him afterward that the student had been captured. The government has not confirmed this, however, and so far only seven of the twenty-one demonstration leaders on the government's original "most wanted" list are known to have been arrested.

Unique to China, as far as I know, is the practice of billing the family of anyone shot to death upon the order of the court the sum of one yuan (approximately twenty-seven cents), ostensibly to cover the cost of the bullet. Macabre as this practice is, surely it is preferable to silence—to torturing a family by allowing it the hope that the victim has somehow successfully hidden himself or, better yet, slipped out of the country. The revelation that some of the student leaders *have* made it out of China, and that foreign embassies may have offered others secret refuge (a popular supposition here is that the Chinese authorities were less upset about the sanctuary granted by the United States Embassy to the astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, long an activist, and his equally activist wife, Li Shuxian, than they were about Washington's disclosing it, in contravention of what they thought had been a private understanding), appears to have presented Chinese leaders with an entirely unprecedented concern: No longer is this a country from which escape is impossible. Wu'er Kaixi, a student leader, and Yan Jiaqi, who used to head the Institute of Political Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and was a member of Zhao Ziyang's once highly esteemed "think tank," were smuggled out to Hong Kong and later turned up in Paris, and then in Chicago, to announce on television the formation of an international Chinese-exile organization, the China Democratic Front. Within China, however, hiding out from the government is still difficult. One of the captured student leaders was turned in by his sister, because, according to one account, she feared he had been spotted in her home by a member of her neighborhood's committee assigned to monitor the comings and goings and other activities of each household.

China lodged a formal protest with France over its reception of Wu'er and Yan, but the United States has been the subject of most of the Chinese authorities' recent denunciations of foreign governments. The most farfetched of these was the complaint a Vice-Minister made to a businessman friend of mine, which was later repeated in part by Prime Minister Li Peng himself, that America's refusal to sell China sufficient tear gas and plastic bullets had forced it to use tanks. (As one who may be described as an "end user" of tear gas fired against demonstrators and observers on

June 4th, I was able to observe that the Chinese forces appeared to have sufficient quantities on hand.) More formally, China's Foreign Ministry has protested the sanctions imposed by President Bush and Congress which ban military sales and loans to China and high-level exchanges with it. The National People's Congress followed up this protest on July 6th with a resolution noting that "some countries and forces hostile to China have been exerting political and economic pressures on China and flagrantly interfering in its internal affairs." It went on to say, in an English translation directly quoted by Xinhua, "We are greatly indignated over this." In their less indignated, and more private, conversations with Washington, I imagine, the Chinese may have thought to mention their increasingly warm relations with the Soviet Union (whose response to the crackdown has been muted), and to point out how awkward this makes their continuing to allow American intelligence technicians to monitor Soviet nuclear and space activities at electronic-listening posts in western China. In any case, after due reflection the State Department on July 7th allowed the Boeing Corporation to proceed with the sale of four forty-eight-million-dollar 757 airliners with navigation systems that fell under the military proscription. In cases where it has less strategic leverage, however, China has contented itself with reacting more in sorrow than in anger. These include the European Economic Community's condemnation of "brutal repression" and its call for an arms embargo on China, the cancellation of promised World Bank loans, and the postponement of talks that had been expected to lead to nearly six billion dollars in loans from Japan, and other negotiations that would allow China to resume its place on the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade.

An American wire-service report on June 30th quoted an anonymous "senior Bush Administration official" as charging that Americans in China are being harassed on a "local and general" level. It's true that most of the people who have been expelled are Americans, among them three news correspondents, ten tourists accused of religious proselytizing, and a teacher and a student at Nankai University, in Tianjin, who were suspected of maintaining close ties to pro-democracy leaders; but Americans constitute a preponderance of the foreigners in China these days, and I haven't seen any signs of specific anti-Americanism. Nevertheless, times of Chinese turmoil are historically followed by resurgences of xenophobia, and the government is making it quite clear that this is to be no exception. During the days between the declaration of martial law, on May 19th, and its tragic enforcement, on June 4th, Beijing's mayor, Chen Xitong, accused student demonstrators on several occasions of coming under foreign influence, and Deng Xiaoping himself, in a speech of thanks to P.L.A. generals on June 9th, said that the goal of those causing the turmoil was to "establish a bourgeois republic entirely dependent on the West." Under such circumstances, high-level diplomatic visits, which are normally rather frequent here, have been conspicuously few of late—among those who cancelled a visit was Queen Beatrix of Holland—and it wasn't until June 29th that a foreign minister, Carlos da Graça, of Sao Tome and Principe, was found to meet with Prime Minister Li Peng and receive his complaint that unspecified foreign nations were creating an "anti-China adverse current," and that "under the banner of human rights these people have made unwarranted accusations of China." Foreigners abroad at night now are still being stopped by martial-law sentries for identity checks. (One of the not wholly unwelcome repercussions of this is that drivers working for Xinhua have refused to drive me and my fellow "foreign experts" back to our hotel after dark, and our supervisors have been forced to assign us to day work exclusively.) In mid-July, the managers of several tourist hotels with satellite dishes were ordered to switch off the broadcasts of Cable News Network, and then, on the night of July 14th, security agents made a sweep of the newsstands of all tourist hotels and stripped their racks of non-Chinese newspapers and publications. "It is only natural that we disallow newspapers and magazines which interfere with China's internal affairs and hurt the national feelings in China," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Li Jinhua said on July 20th. To date, subscriptions to these publications have not been stopped, but when

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they will be permitted to be sold openly again has not been made clear—not, I imagine, until Wu'er Kaixi and other dissident leaders drop out of the headlines. And in the meantime the ban is being extended to books (including two biographies of Zhao Ziyang) accused of advocating "bourgeois liberalization," or of being "pornographic, superstitious or violent."

HOW this ban on foreign media accords with Deng Xiaoping's determination never to allow China to "turn back into a closed country" and how the indefinite continuation of martial law in Beijing squares with the government's announced efforts to bring back foreigners, both businessmen and tourists, are difficult questions to answer. The State Council spokesman, Yuan Mu, said at a news conference on July 11th that martial law is to be continued here indefinitely as long as "guns seized by rioters are still missing and threaten the safety of the local citizens." As usual, Yuan had half a point: quantities of arms were indeed taken from soldiers and displayed to foreigners during the turmoil before June 5th, and many remain concealed, but so far, at least, there doesn't seem to have been any urgent search for them. In any case, Yuan, according to the account in the official *China Daily*, "expressed the hope that all foreign governments, organizations and individuals would conduct friendly exchanges, tourist and business activities with China without using the lifting of martial law as a precondition."

Yuan's hope is understandable. A State Statistical Bureau spokesman has estimated that the turmoil in May and June cost the country three billion yuan (more than eight hundred million dollars) in lost industrial production, and on July 7th the Beijing municipal government reported that up to then the turmoil had cost it "direct economic losses" of about 1.3 billion yuan, or something in the neighborhood of three hundred and fifty million dollars—and still the cancellations roll in. A five-day conference booked here for fifteen hundred medical scientists in December has been moved to Singapore, and, in a really unkind cut, the World Trade Centers Association, which was to come to Beijing in September to help inaugurate this city's world-trade center, has decided to meet in Geneva instead. Some businesses have already begun to return, though. On July 19th, executives of an American camera corporation signed a twenty-five-year lease on sixty million square feet of industrial space in Guangdong Province, in southern China. (I thought it interesting, however, that the lease-signing ceremony was held in Hong Kong.)

Tourists will probably be harder to bring back. Although former President Richard Nixon and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger have announced that they will carry on with planned visits here in September and October, the National Tourism Administration is predicting a fifty-per-cent reduction in this year's tourism revenues. Last month, Shanghai promised tour operators a twenty-per-cent reduction on charges, and this discount has since been extended nationally. Beijing invited some four hundred travel agents from twenty-nine nations to fly here for a two-day, all-expenses-paid "1989 Tourism Seminar" hastily convened for July 12th, but so far, at least, neither this nor the promised price reductions nor Yuan Mu's appeal not to let martial law interfere with tourism nor the reopening to tourists of the Forbidden City Museum and the Tiananmen Rostrum (and, incidentally, of Tibet, which also remains under martial law) appears to have made much headway against the "advisories" on travel in China which were issued by some of the nations that evacuated their citizens from here after June 4th. The United States extended its advisory on July 18th, pointedly noting that "the Department of State regards the security situation in China as unsettled." Certainly tourists who do come right now should be advised to be discreet about where they point their cameras. Last month, soldiers guarding Tiananmen Square chased down three busloads of the city's first recent visitors—Japanese stopping by on their way back from the World Youth Festival, in North Korea—after spotting them taking pictures, in contravention of martial-law regulations, and confiscated and exposed the visitors' films and videotapes.

At least tour groups, if they make the proper arrangements with the martial-law authorities, can enter Tiananmen Square. On June 27th, Li Shiyun, a P.L.A. general, who commanded part of the June 4th assault, told a group of reporters that the

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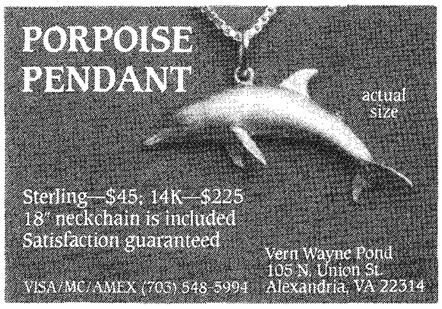
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Army had "returned the square to the people," but except for those bearing tickets to official ceremonies, like the Communist Party's sixty-eighth anniversary, on July 1st, it's still closed to the rest of us. And while it is now permitted to drive or bicycle on the streets all the way around the square—even in front of the Great Hall of the People—the sidewalks of those streets remain barred to pedestrians.

IN any event, bringing tourists back to Beijing under the guns of the martial-law authorities is, in my view, a less difficult challenge than the one recently met by those charged with the responsibility of drafting a law that would allow Chinese the right to demonstrate and, at the same time, make sure they never again exercise it. Although the freedoms of assembly, procession, and demonstration are encompassed in the constitution of the People's Republic, they weren't often practiced here before the turmoil began last April, and a National People's Congress committee that had been wrestling with the problem in the abstract was called upon to come up with the draft of such a law. It was submitted by Prime Minister Li to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on July 3rd, and when, on the following day, one of my Chinese colleagues at Xinhua asked me for a definition of the word "Orwellian" I understood what had prompted his question. The draft, which ran to twenty-four articles, began by noting that "Chinese people are the masters of the country and enjoy various democratic rights empowered by the constitution," and proceeded to set forth the conditions on demonstrations, which I have excerpted from the *China Daily* translation:

> No protesters will be allowed to flaunt the basic principles of the Constitution or go against the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party or the socialist system.... No demonstrations advocating the split of the motherland or undermining national unity should be permitted.... Organizers of rallies, parades and demonstrations should ask for permission from the public security departments. They should also make clear their purpose, posters, slogans, the number of participants, hours and places of starting and ending, route and the names, professions and addresses of the organizers.... No citizens should start, organize or take part in rallies or demonstrations involving people from different areas or different units.... Soldiers, police and public servants are not allowed to organize or participate in rallies and demonstrations without permission from the heads of their units.... No demonstrations should be held within a certain distance of important state organs, major military installations, airports, ports, train stations, State guesthouses, foreign embassies and consulates in China or other diplomatic agencies.... [Foreigners] are not allowed to participate in demonstrations by Chinese people unless they have permission.

Equally Orwellian, I'm afraid, have been China's recent attempts to write an account of the turmoil that would justify its crackdown. Deng began this exercise in Newspeak with his address to the Army commanders on June 9th, in which he charged that the turmoil was caused by "a rebellious clique and a large number of the dregs of society." Apparently, Deng and I had watched different films of the Army's entry into the city, since he denied that tanks had ever rolled over demonstrators. Had they done so, he said, "this would have created a confusion between right and wrong among the people nationwide." On June 14th, the Propaganda Department of the Beijing Municipal Committee followed up Deng's speech with a lengthy account of the vicissitudes suffered by the Army ("The great losses the martial law soldiers suffered are eloquent testimony to their restraint and tolerance"), and, while I don't dispute the occurrence of each of the incidents it reports, I do feel that the department might have said something about how many more civilians came to be killed than soldiers and policemen, the number of whose deaths was put at a hundred.

In the next, and certainly most extensive, official version of what happened, the number of civilians who had been killed was estimated at more than two hundred, including thirty-six college students. On June 30th, Mayor Chen Xitong delivered a twenty-five-thousand-word account of the turmoil to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and its descriptions of events leading up to the first student demonstrations, on April 16th, are, if nothing else, illustrative of the subjective nature of the surveillance we are all under here. A potluck supper that a friend of mine arranged at our hotel for foreign experts eager to meet Fang Lizhi is described in it as a "winter jasmine get-together of famed personalities." I also wonder whether the 1976 Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman will agree with his characterization in this report as an "ultra-liberal economist," but he should appreciate being able to add to his distinctions the honor of leading off Mayor Chen's remarkable chronology. Apparently, last September 19th, when Dr. Friedman called on then General Secretary Zhao Ziyang (and, according to the Xinhua account at the time, "briefed Zhao on his views on price reform, inflation, and enterprise reform"), "some Hong Kong newspapers and journals which were said to have close ties to Zhao's internal 'brain trust' gave enormous publicity to this and spread the political message that 'Beijing is using Hong Kong's mass media to topple Deng and protect Zhao.' "

Chen doesn't go so far as to charge Zhao himself with instigating such a plot, but he does blame him for disclosing a not very surprising state secret—that Deng, although he had formally resigned from the Politburo, retained control over it—to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at their meeting at the Great Hall of the People, on May 16th. According to the Mayor, Zhao's statement to Gorbachev that "we have always reported to Comrade Deng Xiaoping and asked for his advice while dealing with the most important issues" was the General Secretary's "way of directing the fire of criticism at Comrade Deng Xiaoping and making the situation"—the students' hunger strike in Tiananmen Square—"even worse." There is a villain in Chen's piece, and it is Wan Runnan, who until July 11th was the general manager of China's most successful electronics and computer enterprise, the Stone Company. Fortunately for Wan, he is one of those who have escaped to Hong Kong and the outside world, for, according to this account, the Stone Corporation donated "materials worth some hundreds of thousands of yuan" to riot "instigators," and Wan himself took over de-facto command of the student demonstrators and sought to obtain by subterfuge the signatures of members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, with the apparent purpose of satisfying "six conditions" that the students demanded, which, Chen says, Wan formulated as "to withdraw the troops, cancel the martial law, remove Li Peng, ask Deng Xiaoping and President Yang Shangkun to quit, and let Zhao Ziyang resume his post."

Anyhow, the Mayor's report ought to make a swell movie, and I suppose at least part of it already has, since the most recent official propaganda effort is a forty-minute English-language video entitled "The True Story of the Turmoil," which has been distributed to China's embassies around the world and is now on sale to foreigners here for thirty yuan, or about eight dollars. I haven't had a chance to view this yet, but it is my understanding that among the things it does not show is the killing of anyone in Tiananmen Square (although it is said to show graphically the corpses of soldiers killed elsewhere by crowds). The question of whether people were or were not killed specifically in the square in the early morning of June 4th has become the focus of China's quarrel with the Western press, and, most notably, with the Voice of America. The government's consistent account is that the student demonstrators asked to leave and were permitted to leave without being fired upon, and even the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (which is published in Hong Kong and is no admirer of the People's Republic) concedes that in this the government may be "technically" correct. If so, it is a distinction without a difference: observers whom I trust have told me that there was firing into the square before the students left, that they saw people wounded there, and that if they could not say for certain that anyone actually died in Tiananmen Square they could say they saw students fired on and killed both on Qianmen, the street that borders it on the south, and Chang'an Jie, the Avenue of Eternal Peace, which passes it on the north.

FAR more important than the question of who died where, though, and even more important than the question of what China will now do with those it has charged with "counter-revolutionary rebellion" (although that will certainly affect its attempt to rehabilitate its image in the world outside), is what kind of country China will now become. Deng Xiaoping says that it will remain "open to the outside world"; tourists and businessmen have been invited to return (and on even more advantageous terms than before June 4th); and the government has also announced that it will continue to welcome "foreign experts" to work here. The manager of one tourist hotel, whom I consider to be an astute China watcher, estimates that the country has been set back a decade, but he is older, and certainly more cynical, than a Chinese friend of mine who broke down in tears during the early morning of June 4th while watching the tanks smash their way toward Tiananmen. "China is dead," he said. "They have killed China, and now all the world will think of us as murderers and barbarians."

But China isn't dead, and the world won't think any such thing—not so long as people like my friend, and many other Chinese I've come to know here, keep their own hopes for it alive. China will no doubt come back, and in less time than the ten years the hotel manager predicts. In fact, it required only forty-nine days, which is the length of the traditional Chinese mourning period, for the process to begin. On Sunday, July 23rd, more than five hundred Beijing University students assembled in front of a dormitory for what they called a mourning ceremony for fallen comrades. Although the students sang the Maoist anthem "The East Is Red" and "Without the Communist Party There Would Be No New China," and nothing was said that could be viewed in the slightest sense as counter-revolutionary, Beijing Communist Party officials said that they considered the rally "a serious political transgression." Participants are now being interrogated, I hope without success, to ascertain who its organizers were. As I'm sure the authorities here don't have to be reminded, the first gatherings in Tiananmen Square in mid-April were for the purpose of mourning (for Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang). With all its restrictions, that new law on demonstrations doesn't bar collective mourning, which, in China, is the most eloquent and possibly the most effective form of expression.

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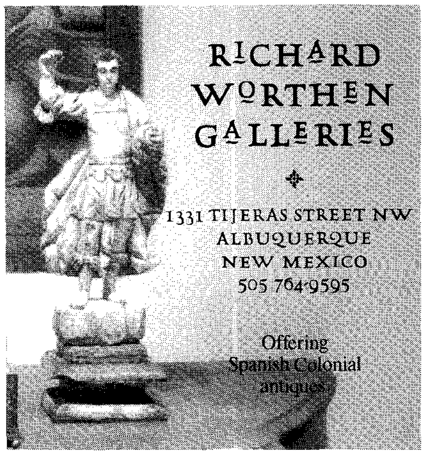

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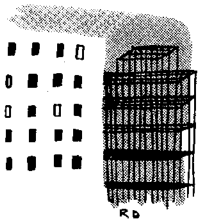
THE SKY LINE

In the Classic Vein

THE campus of Cornell University lies scattered across an immense hillside, looking out over nearby Lake Cayuga—the longest of the Finger Lakes, in the upper middle portion of New York State—and then west to a series of dimpled hills and valleys. Below the university, on the shore of the southernmost tip of the lake, is the small, trim city of Ithaca. In 1865, Ezra Cornell, the entrepreneur who helped to establish the Western Union Telegraph Company and became its largest stockholder, founded the institution that bears his name; his philanthropy included turning his farm, on the outskirts of Ithaca, into a campus. The most prominent topographical features of the campus are two heavily wooded gorges, cut through layer upon layer of sedimentary rock by streams dating from before the last Ice Age. For a hundred and fifty years, one of the gorges has been called Cascadilla (Spanish for "little cascade"). The other gorge bears the blunter name of Fall Creek, after the innumerable waterfalls that mark its course.



In 1868, on the south bank of Cascadilla Gorge, the college acquired a grim-looking fortress of a building, mansard-roofed, in the then fashionable style of the Second Empire. Previously a water-cure establishment, this building, Cascadilla Hall, was made into a dormitory for both faculty and students. It is still in use, having been remodelled and modernized. Between it and College Avenue, just below the point where a single-arched stone bridge leaps the gorge and draws one into the heart of the present-day, densely built-up campus, is a parcel of land that until recently was a vacant lot, used for parking. The parcel is the site of the newly completed Cornell University Center for Theatre Arts, designed by the British architectural firm of James Stirling Michael Wilford & Associates.

From an architect's point of view, a more challenging site would be hard to imagine—at once wild and tame, rural and urban. To the north, the land slopes gently toward the brink of the gorge, whose steep walls drop a hundred and forty feet into the churning water of its stream; to the west is Cascadilla Hall; to the south is Sheldon Court, a large dark-brown brick building, dating from the eighteen-nineties, and, like Cascadilla Hall, a dormitory; and to the east is College Avenue, which widens at the bridge approach into a small, irregularly shaped public square—the hub of a cluster of shops, restaurants, and turn-of-the-century houses that make up the district known as Collegetown. The façade of the Center for Theatre Arts, clad in gray-and-white Vermont marble, confronts this unplanned space and helps to bestow upon it the dignity of a true square. Between the Center and the square the architects have inserted a paved plaza, with benches and a pergola that will someday be wreathed in purple and white wisteria. The Center has a high gabled roof, which screens from view a hodgepodge of domestic rooftops and a large, multilevel concrete parking garage. This bunkerlike garage is convenient to the Center; townspeople arriving by car to attend performances have only to walk a few steps along a newly constructed footpath connecting the garage with the Center. The College Avenue square is a local bus stop, linking the university with downtown Ithaca. In recognition of this, a two-story octagonal pavilion, also clad in gray-and-white marble, has been placed at a few yards' distance from the Center, between it and the bridge; the pavilion has an open, arcaded ground floor, which provides shelter for bus patrons, and its second floor provides auxiliary office space for the Center.

The pavilion is a delightful little structure, of the sort one might expect to glimpse in the background of an Italian Renaissance painting. When I journeyed up to Cornell some time ago to attend the official opening of the Center for Theatre Arts, and had a chance to discuss the building with its designers, James Stirling and Michael Wilford, I observed to Stirling that I would have been far less surprised to encounter the Center in Tuscany than in Ithaca. Stirling, a plump, rumpled, ruddy-cheeked man in his early sixties, affected to be astonished by my remark: with a shrug, he implied that he saw nothing in the least Italianate in the Center. (Architects, like most artists and writers, are practiced at concealing the sources of their inspiration. I remember asking Dylan Thomas what poet had had the greatest influence upon him in his youth—it was plainly enough Yeats—and he replied at once, "Hardy," the poet to whom it was plain that he owed least.)

In spite of Stirling's disowning shrug, the Italianate nature of the Center's design is confirmed by a marble-clad campanile that rises fifty feet above the midsection of the gable (though it lacks bells, the campanile has a practical purpose: its lower reaches serve as the shaft of a passenger elevator) and by the presence along the north side of the building of a long double loggia. Half of the loggia is glass-enclosed, and provides an all-weather approach to the main entrance of the building; the other half is roofed but open to the elements, and offers a dramatic prospect of Cascadilla Gorge. The roof of the loggia is of redwood planks covered with slates and is supported by steel trusses that are painted, like the window trim throughout the building, a vivid French green (Stirling green to Stirling's friends, because he uses it so often) and rest upon stout concrete posts. A number of the posts have been squared off to a height of twelve or fourteen feet above the pavement by a sheathing of thin marble panels, held in place by stainless-steel clips. The joints between the panels are left unmortared, creating strong shadow lines; in stormy weather, rain makes its way to the ground behind the panels, leaving their outer surfaces unstained.

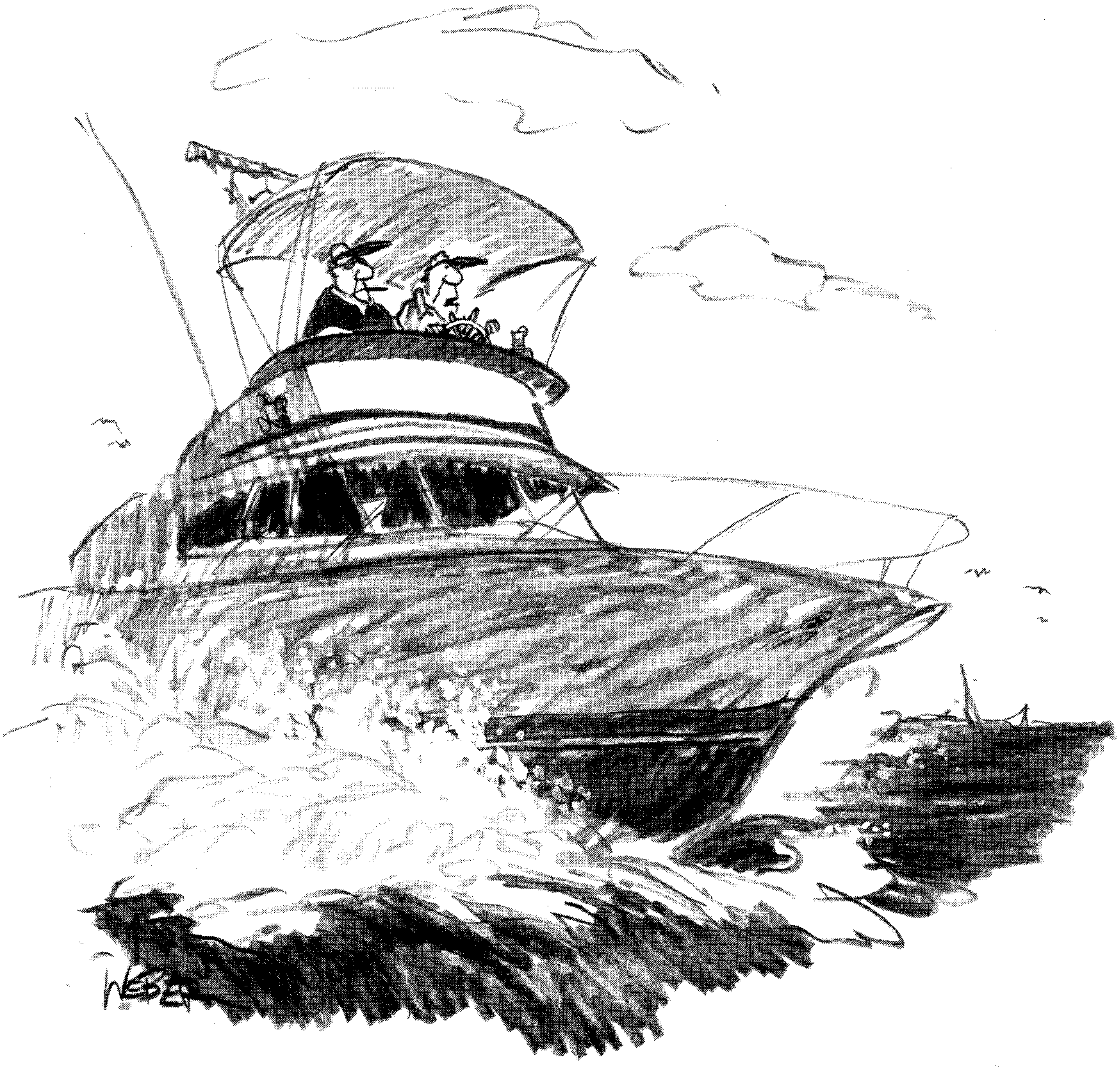
Cornell faculty members in the Theatre Arts Department—a department that embraces drama, dance, film, and video—had drawn up and revised a program for the Center for Theatre Arts many times during the ten or fifteen years before 1982, when Stirling and Wilford were commissioned to design the building. (As is customary, an American firm of architects—in this case, the New York City-based firm of Wank Adams Slavin Associates—

worked in collaboration with Stirling, Wilford.) At an early stage, the university had decided that the Music Department would gain adequate space for both teaching and performance by the move of the Theatre Arts Department to its new quarters—a decision that led to a welcome diminution in the amount of money the university would have to raise in order to build a Center of sufficient size, and, for the architects, an equally welcome simplification of what was bound to be an intricate set of plans.

The complexity of the interior of the Center is staggering. It contains, on some six levels, three theatres; three dance studios; half a dozen laboratories for scenic design, lighting design, costume design, and the like; two seminar rooms; a library; and thirty-two administrative and faculty offices. These varied volumes of space have been concealed by an exterior that appears at first to be a simple structure of moderate size, as straightforward in elevation and as sparing of elegant details as a barn. Though one gains the impression—again, at first glance—that the exterior is clad entirely in marble, a second glance reveals that it is clad mostly in stucco; similarly, most of the interior is of economical drywall construction, with occasional flourishes of fine wood panelling and polished brass. "Name architects" of the calibre of Stirling and Wilford are invariably suspected of designing expensive buildings; it is the boast of everyone concerned with the Center that it cost just under seventeen million dollars to build.

From the front entrance, off the loggia, one steps into a three-story-high space that gives access to the building as a whole and also serves as a foyer for both the Proscenium Theatre and the Flexible Theatre. (The not very winsomely named Flexible Theatre is, formally, the Class of 1956 Flexible Theatre, and I assume that other appellations, too, are temporary and will eventually be replaced by the names of donors. In the world of fund-raising, not so much as a broom closet in any new institutional building is likely to go unnamed for long.) The Proscenium Theatre is the most prominent feature of the Center. It is a handsome space—horseshoe-shaped, in an early-nineteenth-century fashion, to give the audience an intimate relationship to the stage. Because the theatre is intended mostly for the use of students, it has been kept small—four hundred and fifty-six seats—and is easily adaptable to a variety of uses. It has two balconies, with booths for the control of sound and light built into the back wall of the second balcony; on a higher level, a light bridge extends across the ceiling. For so small a theatre, it has an exceptionally ample stage: the proscenium arch is thirty-eight feet across and twenty-five feet high, and the total stage area, including the wings, embraces thirty-three hundred square feet. The orchestra pit has an electrically operated lift and is readily covered to provide a thrust stage.

The Flexible Theatre, as its name implies, can be juggled to allow performances that call for arena, alley, proscenium, or thrust-stage seating, and it can accommodate an audience of up to a hundred and seventy. One story below the Proscenium Theatre is the Dance Performance Studio, which by means of retractable bleacher seating can leave the entire floor clear for dancing or can accommodate an audience of up to a hundred and thirty-two. Under the Flexible Theatre is a laboratory called the Black Box Studio; nearby is the steeply raked little Film Forum Auditorium, with a hundred



"I took a look at the First Amendment, and some of that stuff isn't funny."

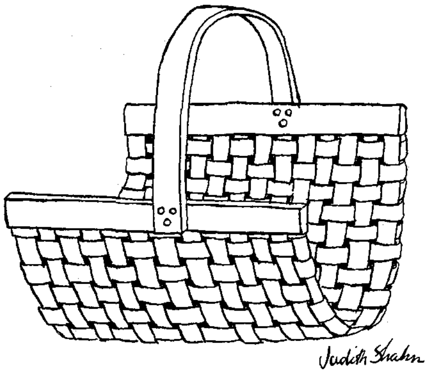
and three fixed seats. The main dance studio is a large, airy room on an upper floor, with a prow-like bay window looking out upon College Avenue. French doors open onto terraces on either side of the studio, allowing the dancers to cool off between classes. At night, passersby on College Avenue are afforded a view through this uncurtained window of the brilliantly lighted studio and of young dancers whirling about in leotards—an especially welcome sight in winter, with the temperature in Collegetown well below freezing and snow falling.

The big, formally designated spaces of the Center having been neatly stacked inside the Chinese box of the structure, the remaining studios and the offices, rest rooms, and flights of stairs are tucked into place all round them in a nearly invisible fashion. Le Corbusier thought to compliment the houses he designed by calling them machines for living, a description that in the case of houses strikes me as being no compliment at all; as for the Center, to say that it succeeds admirably both as a machine for performing and as a machine for watching performances is to pay it an authentic compliment.

THAT the Center should strike a visitor as an efficient machine is to say that the architects have accomplished at Cornell what they have often been accused of failing to accomplish elsewhere. For well over thirty years, it has been usual—indeed, it has amounted almost to a convention—to praise Stirling in the highest possible terms (the architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable has called him "one of the great architectural talents of the twentieth century"), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to utter gloomy caveats about the practicality of his designs.

Like Frank Lloyd Wright before him, Stirling is equally famous for the beauty of his buildings and for the terrible things that people have been prompted to say about them. In a gesture more offensive than any that Wright had to submit to, a number of people at Cambridge University proposed several years ago that the History Faculty Building, designed by Stirling and James Gowan in 1964 and completed in 1967, be demolished, precisely because it *wasn't* an efficient machine: the complaint was made that it leaked, it was difficult to heat, and its layout increased the labors of scholars instead of lessening them. Besides, to many observers the building, which flings itself skyward like a great sail of glass, is a hateful intrusion on the ancient, low-roofed Cantabrigian community. Plainly scratching about to praise the building as much as he could, the British architectural historian Sir John Summerson has called it "a redoubtable, daunting monument; enigmatic (which way round is it?); a crystal fort with a shiny brick rampart (a touch of Sant'Elia here); something of a factory, something of a conservatory," and has gone on to say, "The reading room, sheltered under a monster technological awning in the angle of the two wings, whose inner flanks the awning cruelly defaces, I found difficult to take. I still do. I am only partly reconciled by seeing it as a comment on the ungentle side of history—the history 'industry,' the research production line. But the building as a whole strikes me with something very like awe."

Similarly upsetting to many has been the dormitory that Stirling designed for Queens College, Oxford, in 1966. It was completed in 1971, and shortly afterward a writer in *Connoisseur* complained that both it and the History Faculty Building in Cambridge showed "a crude disregard of the architectural ethics of the two cities," and that the two buildings "are offensive in scale, conception, and environment." Architectural ethics aside, the fact is that the dormitory is a thrilling expression of the latest engineering resources available to architects: flights of stairs seem to float in glass cages outside the walls of a building that pitches inward from top to bottom; a kitchen ventilating shaft amusingly disguises itself as a sculpture in the form of a gigantic weathervane. Rising from the banks of a tributary to the sluggish little Isis, this dormitory looks over green treetops to the noble tower of Magdalen College, and its insistent high-tech prankishness appears both to salute that solemn, sixteenth-century neighbor and to cock a snook at it.

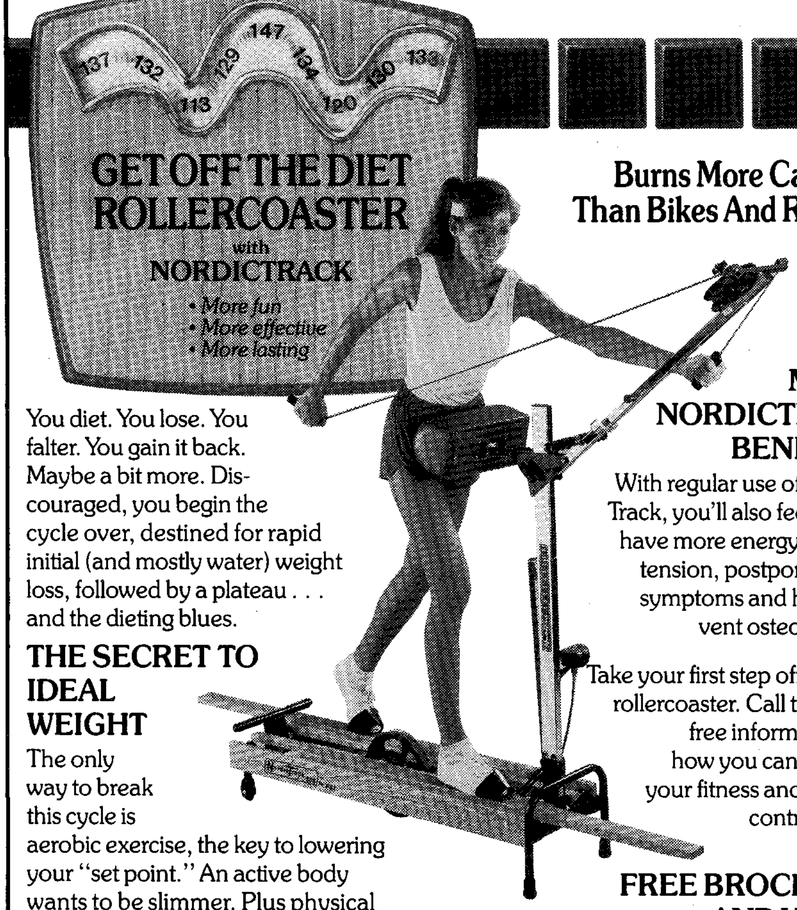


STIRLING's most famous building is the addition he and Wilford designed for the state art museum in Stuttgart. The addition, which was constructed between 1979 and 1984 (in 1981, Stirling received the Pritzker Architecture Prize, generally held to be as important as a Nobel Prize), and which contains a theatre, galleries, and new administrative offices, dominates the original, early-nineteenth-century classical museum structure not only by its size but by its assertiveness. The program for the building required the architects to preserve a public footpath that linked the park across the busy highway in front of the museum property to a plaza on a hillside behind it. At first, the preservation of this footpath must have struck Stirling as an impertinent nuisance, threatening the integrity of any design obliged to accommodate it; with breathtaking boldness, he made the footpath the centerpiece of the addition, threading it gently upward first, by zigzag ramps, and then through an immense open-air drum of dressed stone—in effect, a miniature Roman amphitheatre, not unlike the one whose outline remains visible to this day in Lucca. If there has been some dispute about how well the building works as a museum, there is no doubt whatever of its success as a drawing card: the museum has become the second most popular in West Germany, after the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum/Museum Ludwig, in Cologne.

In something like the same fashion, Stirling and Wilford's addition to the Tate Gallery, in London—the Clore Gallery, which houses the incomparable collection of Turners bequeathed by the artist to the state—has proved a great popular success and is given credit (surely to be shared with Turner himself) for a substantial increase in museum attendance. The exterior of the Clore Gallery pleases by being more domestic in scale and more playful in spirit than the beetling and august Tate, to which it attaches itself with a deferential country-house-like garden terrace, an ornamental pool, and an entrance, at right angles to the Tate entrance, that mocks the latter's stateliness by consisting mostly of a sparkling triangle of glass into which has been fitted a bright-green steel frame containing a revolving door. The ground floor provides a lobby convenient for entertaining, a small lecture theatre, offices, and a ceremonial staircase leading to the second floor, which is divided into large, squarish, conventional-looking rooms, suitable for the exhibition of Turner's large, squarish, and—to this day—not in the least conventional paintings.

STIRLING and Wilford's executed designs in the United States include a new wing, finished in 1981, for the architecture school of Rice University, in Houston, and the Sackler Museum, a 1984 addition to the Fogg Art Museum, at Harvard. The Rice building is so unobtrusive—so conscientiously contextural—that it gave Philip Johnson the opportunity to make one of his characteristically barbed witticisms; "I went to Rice to see the building but couldn't find it," he said. As for the Fogg addition, one can certainly find it. Occupying the blockfront on Quincy Street between Cambridge Street and Broadway, and directly across Broadway from the old Fogg building, it presents to the passerby a severely unadorned façade, laid up in alternating bands of tan and dark-blue brick. The blandness of the façade is moderately enlivened by windows that have been punched into it wherever the plan happens to call for them.

It was Stirling's intention to connect the Fogg and the Sackler by means of a bridge over Broadway on approximately the fourth-floor level, the bridge itself to serve as an exhibition gallery. Clearly, this bridge was to be the most arresting feature of the exterior, and all the more so because a tremendous, floor-to-ceiling bull's-eye window was to interrupt each side of its smooth cladding at a point just above the middle of Broadway and at an angle that, distorting the straightforward rectangularity of the bridge, would cause the two windows to be precisely on the Broadway axis—the most prodigious of the many daring window tricks that Stirling has played throughout his career. Because of the objections of Cambridge residents, the



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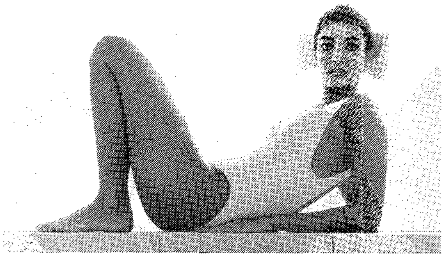

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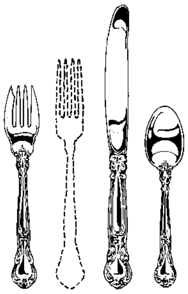

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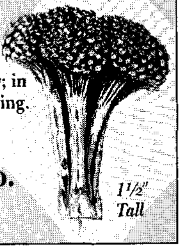

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bridge was abandoned—or, at any rate, postponed. The result is what one might have expected. The columns designed to support the bridge stand idle at either side of the Sackler's main entrance, and the exterior of the building seems at once to offer a shamefaced confession that something has gone wrong and that it would just as soon *not* discuss the reasons for this unfortunate circumstance.

The chief feature of the interior of the Sackler is a stairway that rises flight after flight, landing after landing, within a narrow slot in the center of the building. For a similar purpose, the Clore Gallery makes use of a similar slot, which Summerson has described as being of a sort that would have delighted the British architect Sir John Soane. To contemporary hearts, however, the sight of so many steps mounting relentlessly heavenward is intimidating; as in the depths of a subway station, one glances about for an escalator. To the left of the Sackler's stairs are five levels of administrative offices, to the right of the stairs three levels of galleries, topped by a handsomely skylit library. Since much of a museum is devoted to professional facilities—storage spaces, and the like —which the public never sees, it is hard for a casual visitor to the galleries to judge how well the museum as a whole may be functioning. If in the Sackler one senses a certain parsimony of spirit, this may well be the consequence of a parsimonious budget, against which the architect butted his head in vain.

LIKE most of the fashionable international architects of our day—Pei, Meier, Hollein, Moore, Erickson, and the rest—Stirling spends much of his time in the air, hurtling from one far-flung commission to the next. At the moment, he and his firm are engaged in designing new buildings for the Music School and Theatre Academy in Stuttgart, adjacent to his earlier structure there; they are also working on an addition to the Brera Museum, in Milan, and were chosen last year to design a science library for the University of California at Irvine. It is a fair criticism of this new breed of incessantly peripatetic architects that they run the risk of imposing on a culture alien to them (or, at any rate, little known to them) notions of design which fail to respond to the needs of the culture. How could it be otherwise? For most of us, understanding the culture of the city in which we live requires a lifetime of study; few of us would boast that we are capable of taking in accurately the culture of an entire nation. Yet architects implicitly make such a boast when they accept a commission to design the new capitol in Erewhon, the new museum wing in Utopia. Indeed, it is this very boast that Le Corbusier was implicitly making at Chandigarh, that Louis Kahn was making in Bangladesh, and that Wright was ready to make in Baghdad, before the assassination of the King of Iraq served to stay the old wizard's hand.

Stirling confronts this challenge with equanimity. However distant the land to which he is summoned, he is confident of giving it work that will sooner or later be seen to be contentedly at home there, not least because it will embody attributes that extend far beyond his individual architectural stamp. For Stirling, as he long ago proclaimed—but few then believed him —is a devout, if often cunningly disguised, neoclassicist. Securely underpinning his pranks—that is, his joyous exploitation of our latest technological resources—is the centuries-old language of neoclassicism. It emerges, in however cranky and colloquial a form, in each successive Stirling project, whether on the east coast of northern Scotland (residential buildings for St. Andrews University), in the green lawns of Surrey (the Olivetti Training School), or amid the bright-colored patchwork of Runcorn New Town.

It is this ancient language that I responded to in the Center for Theatre Arts on the brink of Cascadilla Gorge. When I remarked to Stirling on how Italianate the building seemed and he dismissed the suggestion with a shrug, his intention may have been, as I thought at the time, in part to veil the source of his inspiration. But it was also in part to rebuke me silently for a speculation too narrow to do his design principles justice. Standing there in the shadow of the marble *tempietto* alongside the Center, I ought to have perceived that I was simultaneously in contemporary Ithaca, in Renaissance Tuscany, and in the Land of Stirling, where mingled traces of a couple of thousand years of architectural experiment emerge and catch the light and disappear.

—BRENDAN GILL

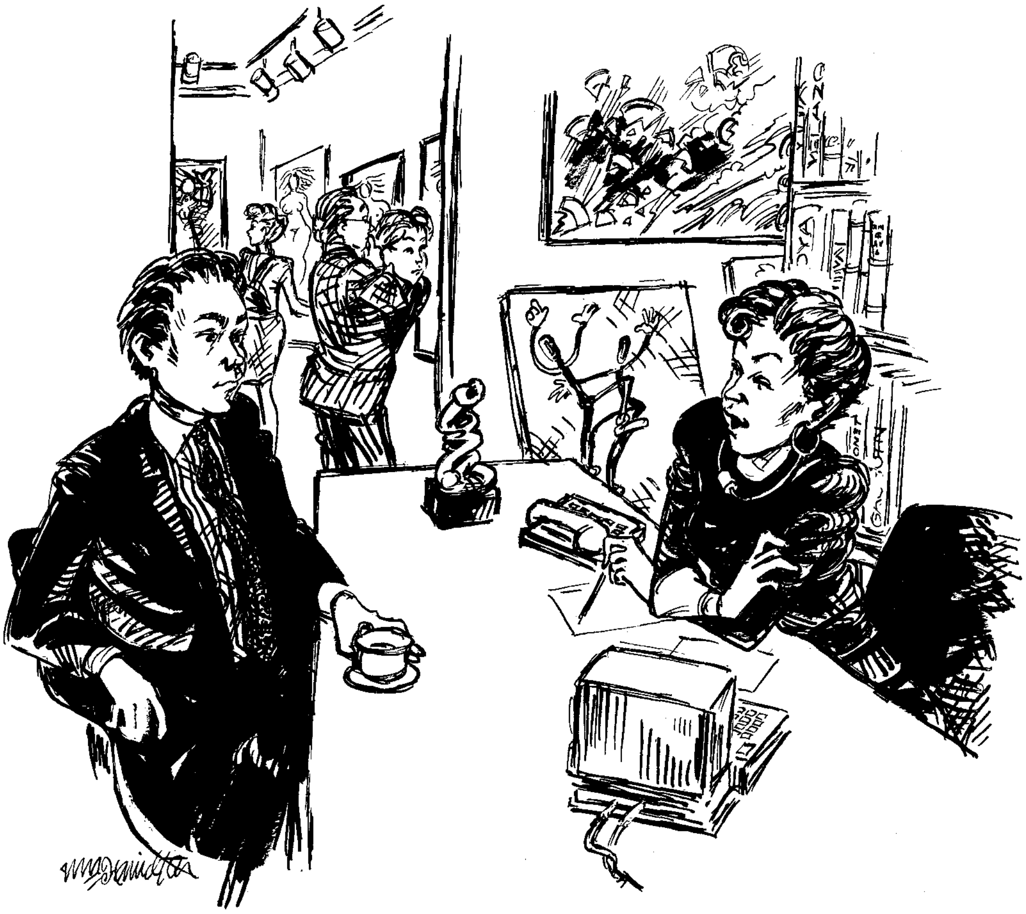
MUSICAL EVENTS

Majesty

THE English Bach Festival was founded in 1963, by the Greek-born harpsichordist, enthusiast, and inspiratrice Lina Lalandi, "to present the music of Bach, his family, and their contemporaries in as authentic a manner as historical research will allow." But from the start the festival cast its net wide. Premières or local premières of music by Xenakis, Messiaen, Ligeti, Stockhausen, Skalkottas were major events of the first decade; Stravinsky, who succeeded Albert Schweitzer as honorary president, came to conduct his "Symphony of Psalms"; new works were commissioned from Roger Smalley, David Bedford, Elisabeth Lutyens; Rossini's "L'Inganno Felice" and Roussel's "Padmâvatî" were revived. In recent years, the focus has narrowed to the annual presentation, in "period" musical and scenic style, of an eighteenth-century lyric drama: first a long Rameau series ("Pygmalion," "La Princesse de Navarre," "Hippolyte et Aricie," "Naïs," "Castor et Pollux," "Platée," "Les Fêtes de Polymnie"), then Handel ("Alceste," "Teseo"), latterly Gluck. "Orphée" was played at Covent Garden last year; this year, Gluck's "Alceste," in the Paris version.

Period presentation is not the only way of bringing Gluck's operas to life, but it is one good way. The E.B.F. has over the years built up a splendid wardrobe of elaborate costumes, courtly, pastoral, and demonic, created after designs by Louis-René Boquet (who was influenced by Boucher). The "Alceste" scenery, of painted backdrops and wings, was derived, by Terence Emery, from eighteenth-century originals. The E.B.F. has also built up an *équipe* that has learned to wear the costumes, to sing and dance in them, to move through the open, uncluttered sets with naturalness and confidence, not mincingly. "Alceste," staged by Tom Hawkes and choreographed by Stephen Preston, held the stage securely.

"Alceste," in either its Vienna (1767) or its Paris (1776) version, is a great opera more often praised than performed. The Met has done it in just three seasons: with Marjorie Lawrence (1941), Kirsten Flagstad (1952, her Met farewell), and Eileen Farrell (1960). The City Opera produced it seven years ago, with Heather Harper, and has not revived it. It is often described as a flawed masterpiece: matchlessly poignant, powerful, and heroic for two acts, but lamed at the last. The Vienna version, which is known mainly by reputation, was the occasion of Gluck's famous manifesto about operatic reform and "beautiful simplicity." In fact, as Riccardo Muti's full-scale Scala revival in 1987 revealed, this first "Alceste" is a magnificently copious and far from simple opera, without the conciseness and directness of its predecessor, "Orfeo" (1762). When Gluck decided to refashion the work for Paris, further "reform" was undertaken. The secondary roles (which Calzabigi had introduced, Gluck said, "to enable spectators to relax") were reduced in number and in importance. The chorus, prominent in Acts I and II, became prominent in Act III, too. There was no concluding ballet. The French "Alceste" was tautly fashioned. But one difficulty remained: that ending. After the heroine's sacrifice, the drama, as Gluck ruefully owned, is effectively over. After so much personal passion, the descent of Apollo, to restore Alcestis to life, seems an inadequate resolution. Act III was found disappointing. At the fifth or sixth performance, Gluck sought to enliven things by introducing Hercules, who (as in Euripides' play and Lully's opera) retrieves Alcestis from Hades. Doubling Alcestis' rescuers, adding demigod to deus ex machina, hardly helps the drama; Hercules' bluff, cheerful music provides some "light relief" but is undistinguished. "Al-



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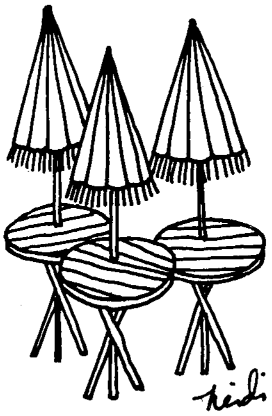
ceste" became a success only when, after Gluck had left Paris, Gossec added a long final suite of dances: andante, march, another andante, minuet, gavotte, extended chaconne. Gluck sanctioned their inclusion in the published score.

Most modern productions abridge or omit the closing ballet. The E.B.F. presented the sequence in full and thereby "resolved" the drama more satisfyingly than any other production of "Alceste" that I have seen. Convention triumphed over dramaturgical scruple; the composer's own objection to dance sequences was confounded. (In 1775, he had written, "I will have no more ballet airs in my operas apart from those that occur during the action.") This seemed a formal, fitting way to descend from the high peaks of emotion; it made me think again about the aptness of the dance sequence that ends Mozart's "Idomeneo." The effectiveness depended much on the consistent style of this presentation; throughout the evening, the scenic formality had thrown Gluck's departures from convention into even higher relief than usual. (Of course, in a modern, as opposed to a period, production of "Alceste," Peter Sellars and Mark Morris might similarly conspire; the thought of what one may see and hear when Sellars one day confronts Gluck is exciting.) The individual artists were not remarkable. Claire Primrose, a young Australian soprano who sings Leonore for Kent Opera, compassed the title role honestly and ably, but she did not hit the French words eloquently. Gilles Ragon avoided the charge levelled at the first French Admetus, Joseph Le Gros, of crying too loudly, but he was more graceful than grand. Marc Minkowski, conducting the E.B.F. Baroque Orchestra, seemed readier to beat out the beats than to make the drama move. But the opera triumphed.



I RETURNED this summer to the Aix-en-Provence Festival after a quarter-century absence. From 1948, when the festival began, to 1963, I had been a pretty constant visitor—enamored of the Provençal town, glad to hear Mozart "under the stars" (though contained by the courtyard walls of the Archbishop's palace), prepared to overlook musical shortcomings during days of sun-filled happiness. Mainly good memories remained: of first hearing Suzanne Danco (a Fiordiligi and Donna Elvira unparalleled), Léopold Simoneau, Anja Silja (a fiery nineteen-year-old Queen of the Night), Graziella Sciutti, Gianna d'Angelo, Pilar Lorengar, Luigi Alva, Teresa Berganza; of hearing Schoenberg and Webern, Boulez's "Marteau sans Maître," Luigi Nono's "Incontri" conducted by Hans Rosbaud in a way to still anxieties about the difficulty of responding to "modern music." The Aix I knew is now "vieil Aix," surrounded by modern suburbs: the populace is trebled, the area covered by the town decupled. The courtyard theatre has been rebuilt; sky and stars are now less visible. I went back with misgivings. It took only a day to recapture the old delight in the place.

In the early years of the festival, successful productions were retained. Cassandre's celebrated décor for "Don Giovanni" served from 1949 to 1972, Balthus's for "Così" from 1950 to 1961, Derain's for the "Seraglio" from 1951 to 1967, Clavé's for "Figaro" from 1952 to 1964. In today's Aix, new productions are the thing. One of this year's new productions was of "The Magic Flute"; I hope to write about it later, in connection with other summer Mozarts. A second was of Purcell's "The Fairy-Queen." Hopes for it ran high. Les Arts Florissants, directed by William Christie, had been engaged for the musical elements; the Compagnie Ris et Danceries, with Francine Lancelot and Béatrice Massin as choreographers, for the dances; and the Peter Hall Theatre Company, with Adrian Noble as director, for the spoken play. The result was an evening of uncommon pleasure, but it was not quite the full-scale festival presentation one had expected. The spoken text of "The Fairy-Queen" is a reworking of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" (not a familiar play in 1692, when "The Fairy-Queen" first appeared). The late-seventeenth-century revisions, as the literary historian Roger Savage has written, "have a consistency and integrity of their own, and besides breathe the same air as Purcell's superb score." Mr. Savage produced an "original" version, with Edinburgh University students, in 1972; in London and The Hague last year, Mr. Christie conducted another, with Guildhall School students and an orchestra from the Hague Conservatory. Both shows were acclaimed as vindicating the unfamiliar art form to which "The Fairy-Queen," like "King Arthur," belongs. In Aix, however, Shakespeare's lines were instated. Well, a case can be made for that—though the case was badly made by the British actors, who tended to shout and to break up the familiar lines with ridiculous pauses: "The lunatic, the . . . lover, and . . . the poet are of . . . imagination all . . . compact." The idea, I suppose, is to suggest spontaneity—sentences made up as they go along. The effect was of lines imperfectly memorized, and the actors were lucky to escape prompting from an impatient audience.

Less pardonable than the speaking—or shouting—of Shakespeare, rather than the 1692 text, were the cuts inflicted on Purcell's score. Thirteen musical numbers were omitted; five were abridged; long "symphonies" were dismembered and dropped in piecemeal to accompany scene changes or underpin speech. The forms of "The Fairy-Queen" are so clear that such shuffling and cutting are hard to countenance. The musical execution, however, was exquisite: the instrumental timbres bewitching, the singing sensitive. Mr. Christie's command of metre, tempo, phrase, and transition was as sure as ever. A large company of singers—Nancy Argenta, Lynne Dawson, Charles Daniels, Thomas Randle, Jean-Paul Fouchécourt, and Thomas Lander among them—formed at once soloists and chorus. The dancing was elegantly accomplished—the final chaconne especially handsome. Deirdre Clancy's décor was imaginative and attractive. Les Arts Florissants has recorded the score, for Harmonia Mundi.

The Aix festival is not all opera. In the cathedral, there was a long series of choral concerts, ranging from Pérotin, Ockeghem, and Charpentier to Haydn and Mendelssohn. There were many song recitals. Thomas Lander's was outstanding. The young Swedish baritone sang as moving a "Schöne Müllerin" as I have heard: beautiful, forward tone through all the range, no forcing, no affectations, all the words alive. Other good recitals were given by Derek Lee Ragin and Thomas Randle. Song seems to be flourishing in Europe. The Wigmore Hall, in London, bills a series of thirteen fall recitals. The hall holds just five hundred and fifty people, and it is where such "celebrity artists" as Elly Ameling, Nicolai Gedda, and Olaf Baer choose to sing.

At Glyndebourne, Peter Hall's 1981 production of Britten's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was revived. It was an enchantment. The music is as subtle and supple as Purcell's, and even richer. Shakespeare's lines fall into lyricism. (The Aix actors could learn much about apt declamation by listening to Britten's music.) Jane Glover's conducting was delicate and strong; the third-act prelude was particularly beautiful. John Bury's scenery—economical, inspired, exact in its evocation of nature's colors at night—cast a romantic spell. This was an ensemble production, at once refined and robust, filled with imagery that captivated ear and eye together. Praise to all, and special praise to young Daniel John, an engaging and poetic Puck (at Aix, Puck was a grizzled little gaffer); to Michael Chance, a poetic and precise Oberon; to John Graham-Hall and Adrian Thompson, a touching and funny Flute and Snout.

—Andrew Porter

•

The most widely publicized incident of the Gorbachev trip was the "theft" of Alexander Pushkin's pistols. The Soviets have been asking France for some time for the pair of dueling pistols with which the great Russian romantic writer was killed in 1837 in a St. Petersburg duel with a French officer who had been paying too much attention to the author's wife.

The pistols were given by a French collector in 1971 to Michel Debre, then President Charles de Gaulle's prime minister. Debre, also mayor of the Loire Valley town of Amboise until three months ago, gave them to the local museum. He resisted Soviet attempts over the years to get them for the Hermitage, the art museum in Leningrad (formerly St. Petersburg), but the old Gaullist was finally turned out of office by the voters. The new leftist mayor, Andre Chollet, was less scrupulous. The day before Gorbachev's arrival, he surrendered the pistols to Jean Darmes, who came in a special car from the Elysee Palace.—*Boston Globe*.

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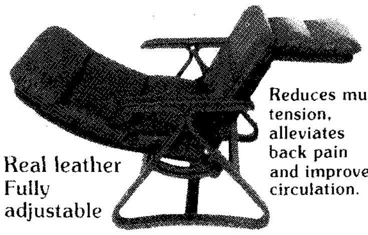

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BOOKS

Mixed Blessings

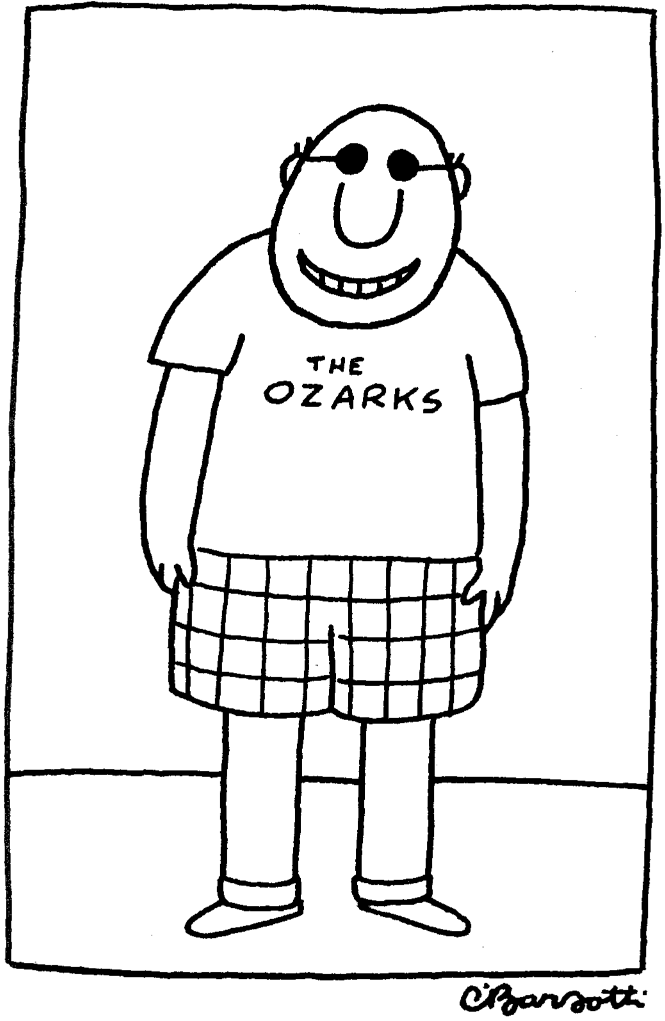
THE great Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians has embraced jazz. Grove first approached the music with some sort of seriousness in 1980, when the New Grove Dictionary included not only articles on jazz but almost two hundred entries on jazz musicians. It came even closer in 1986, in the New Grove Dictionary of American Music—more than four hundred entries on the music and its makers. Now the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz has arrived, and it attempts to encompass all the jazz literature that has accumulated since the mid-thirties, when Hugues Panassié published the first critical book on jazz ("Le Jazz Hot"), Charles Delaunay published the first discography ("Hot Discography"), Louis Armstrong the first jazz autobiography ("Swing That Music"), Dorothy Baker the first jazz novel ("Young Man with a Horn"), and Otis Ferguson the first more or less regular jazz criticism in a national magazine (*The New Republic*).

Here are some of Jazz Grove's particulars. It comes in two volumes, each measuring eight and a half inches by eleven inches (the size of the standard piece of copy paper), and each a little shy of seven hundred pages. There are two broad columns to a page, set in readable type on good stock (there is no indication of whether or not it is acid-free), and surrounded by generous gutters (there is no rule between the columns, and none is needed). Of the forty-five hundred entries, three thousand deal with individuals, and among them are musicians, composers, arrangers, record producers, editors, discographers, impresarios, and writers. The rest of the entries have to do with such subjects as jazz notation, the beat, bands of whatever size and disposition, harmony, improvisation, arrangements, recording, transcription, synthesizers, festivals (two hundred listings), night clubs (nine hundred listings), jazz libraries and archives, the instruments peculiar to jazz, record labels, jazz groups, jazz films, and jazz terms. Each entry on an individual gives his working name, his real name, his nickname, his date and place of birth (and death), a summary of his career, a selective discography and bibliography, and the repository of any oral history he may have done. Most of the musicians are American, but there are also hundreds of international players, ranging from the Turkish trumpeter Maffy Falay to the Argentine bassist Alfredo Remus to the Dutch reed player Jan Morks. The volumes contain a couple of hundred apt and often unfamiliar photographs, taken mainly from the collection of Frank Driggs, and there is a twenty-page bibliography in small type at the back of the second volume, just before a list of the names and origins of the dictionary's two hundred and fifty contributors, many of whom are unknown academics who are not always as hip as they might be. The relatively few well-known contributors include Danny Barker, Joachim Berendt, Edward Berger, Ran Blake, John Chilton, James Lincoln Collier, Frank Driggs, Leonard Feather, Mark Gridley, Lawrence Gushee, André Hodeir, Felicity Howlett, Michael James, Dan Morgenstern, Paul Oliver, Henry Pleasants, Lewis Porter, Brian Priestley, John Rockwell, Bill Russell, Gunther Schuller, Ernie Smith, Richard Sudhalter, J. R. Taylor, Michael Ullman, Martin Williams, and Valerie Wilmer. The largest number of entries are by Barry Kernfeld, who edited the dictionary and is a musicologist. The dictionary's inevitable, formidable price: $350 before tax.

Chief among Jazz Grove's blessings is bringing under one cover the biographical entries that for so long have been buried in the six volumes of Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler's "Encyclopedia of Jazz," in John Chilton's "Who's Who of Jazz," in Roger Kinkle's "Complete Encyclopedia of Popular Music and Jazz," and in Al Rose and Samuel Charters' directories of New Orleans jazz. It is fine, too, to have the entries on films, night clubs, record labels (nothing is more fleeting in jazz), jazz festivals, and jazz archives and libraries; the essays on jazz (almost novella length), jazz forms, harmony, arranging, rhythm, and improvisation; and the histories of the instruments used in jazz, some of them almost invented by jazz musicians (the drum set, many of the saxophones, the vibraphone, the electric guitar).

In many ways, jazz has been a hand-me-down, word-of-mouth music, often unchronicled, unfilmed, and under-recorded, at least until recent times. Jazz Grove, in trying to get the specifics of this ephemeral music on paper, has made a good many mistakes, some of them wild, some of them minor. A selective list, in alphabetical order: Despite his occasional association with jazz players, the harmonica player Larry Adler is not a jazz musician. James Lincoln Collier, in his Louis Armstrong entry, again slides by the celestial Victors Armstrong recorded late in 1932 and early in 1933—a bit of wrongheadedness that first appeared in his 1983 biography of the trumpeter. Astonishing statement No. 1: Daniel Zager claims that Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), an emotional, highly politicized writer, has had "a profound influence on jazz criticism." Gene Bertoncini and Michael Moore's beautiful, unclassifiable duo cannot in any sense be considered a "bop duo." Art Blakey did not learn how to use "his elbow on the tom-tom to alter the pitch" in Africa; he learned it from his master, Sidney Catlett, who used the device long before Blakey went abroad. Bob Brookmeyer was not the first important valve trombonist after Duke Ellington's Juan Tizol—Brad Gowans was. There is no mention in the Tina Brooks discography of the comprehensive Mosaic Blue Note reissue brought out several years ago. (The discographies following the biographical entries tend to be inconclusive and poorly chosen.) Nor is there any mention in Ray Charles' entry of his being a great jazz singer. Three things are wrong in this sentence from the long and comprehensive entry on drums: "Many drummers from the 1950s onwards—notably Sonny Greer, Chick Webb, Chico Hamilton, and Elvin Jones—have also employed timpani mallets." Webb died in 1939, Sid Catlett used mallets extensively in the early forties, and Greer and Jones have rarely, if ever, used them. The entry on Art Farmer is simply inadequate; it does not place him in modern jazz or describe his original and exquisite style. Astonishing statement No. 2: James Lincoln Collier claims that “jazz usually takes place in the context of an actual or simulated jam session, which has some aspects of a ritual.” Jam sessions, which have nearly died out, were manhood-testing rituals; they stood to one side of the nightly, almost blue-collar business of jazz as, first, a dance music and then as a reluctant art music. If Gus Johnson’s “aggressive but fluid and dance-like style made him the best drummer (Count) Basie had after Jo Jones,” then what about Shadow Wilson, Buddy Rich, and Sonny Payne? The sublime tap dancer Baby Laurence is no longer alive; he died in April of 1974. There is no mention that the Dutch-Javanese recording director Harry Lim was responsible in 1944 on the Keynote label for some of the best jazz recordings ever made. Astonishing statement No. 3: Barry Kernfeld writes in his essay on Charles Mingus that “Mingus’s accomplishments surpass in historic and stylistic breadth those of any other major figure in jazz.” Including Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Mingus’s acknowledged master, Duke Ellington? The New York night-club listings are far from complete. (See the priceless glossary of Harlem clubs in the booklet prepared in the early sixties by George Hoefer for the Columbia boxed set called “The Sound of Harlem”—a booklet nowhere mentioned in the bibliography. And where in the New York listings are such clubs as Pookie’s Pub, Bourbon St., Buddy’s Place, the Back Porch, Frank’s Place, the Royal Box, Plaza 9, Hopper’s, the Composer, the Limelight, the Roosevelt Grill, the Rainbow Grill, Shepheard’s, and the Guitar?) We are never told what instrument the Chicago clarinettist and alto saxophonist Joe Poston played. This meaningless description appears in the entry on Mickey Roker: his drumming “draws upon the inherent impetus of the blues.” Leonard Feather leaves out Leo Watson, Jelly Roll Morton, and Hot Lips Page in his essay on jazz singing. And in the brief paragraph accorded the immaculate trumpeter Joe Wilder nothing is said about his style or the fact that he was one of the first jazz musicians to function on both sides of the jazz-classical fence.

PHOTO OPPORTUNITY



Three more quibbles: (1) Although the bibliography at the end of Volume II appears fairly complete, the bibliographies appended to many of the biographical entries are at best haphazard. (2) These figures have been unfairly omitted from Jazz Grove: the baritone saxophonist Gil Melle; the pianists Dorothy Donegan, Phil Moore, Garnet Clark, and Champion Jack Dupree; the drummers Victor Lewis and Baby Lovett; the tubist-bassist-bandleader Vince Giordano; the jazz singers Barbara Lea, Carol Sloane, Peggy Lee, Sylvia Syms, and Nellie Lutcher; the record producer Milt Gabler; and the invaluable night-club owners Barney Josephson and Max Gordon (mentioned in passing in the night-club listings). (3) In his preface Kernfeld declares that he has purposely left out gospel singing. Too bad. Such gospel singers as Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams, Dorothy Love Coates, and Claude Jeter are, their idiom notwithstanding, among the greatest of jazz singers.

Many of Jazz Grove’s short biographies are admirable. These stand out: J. Bradford Robinson’s on Red Allen and on Buddy Bolden; Barry Kernfeld’s on John Coltrane and on Freddie Hubbard; John Chilton’s on Bobby Hackett; Michael James’ on Warne Marsh; Bob Zieff’s on Bobby Stark; Lawrence Gushee’s on King Oliver and on New Orleans jazz; and Gunther Schuller’s on Ornette Coleman.

THE jazz historian and biographer James Lincoln Collier is a born revisionist. His latest effort is a ninety-five-page pamphlet, “The Reception of Jazz in America” (Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College), in which he attempts to demolish the old belief that jazz, neglected in its own country, was first appreciated by Europeans. Collier claims that Americans have always been knowledgeable about jazz and that they began to write intelligently about it in the twenties and early thirties, long before the Europeans knew what was happening. Two of the early American critics he advances for attention are familiar: the novelist and photographer Carl Van Vechten and the blues specialist Abbe Niles. He pulls the third out of his hat—R. D. Darrell, long a critic of and handyman writer about classical music. Darrell, it turns out, wrote about jazz for small-circulation music magazines from the mid-twenties to the early thirties. Collier quotes Darrell persuasively on Ellington; he understood what he was hearing. Collier points out that in 1937 *Time* estimated that there were half a million “serious jazz fanciers” in this country. (Benny Goodman was riding high then and the swing craze had

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begun, so *Time's* guess might have been somewhere near the mark. But such widespread jazz admiration has never been evident since. When two or three jazz fans find each other anywhere, they consider themselves a crowd.) Collier also argues that the belief in European clairvoyance was started by American leftists who wanted the American establishment to look reactionary. He claims that Hugues Panassié's "Hot Jazz," which is generally credited with turning us on to jazz in this country, is emotional, inaccurate, and irresponsible. (Panassié, of course, had not yet been to America, and had based his book on recordings.) But for all its ineptness Panassié's book had an enthusiasm and love for the music which jarred and excited the American young. (Gunther Schuller says that Panassié brought him to the music.) Collier is not convincing when he attempts to pooh-pooh the Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet's astonishing description of Sidney Bechet, written in 1919, when jazz was largely sequestered in New Orleans. Nor does he explain why there have always been so many people in this country who cannot even tell you what jazz is.

—WHITNEY BALLIETT

BRIEFLY NOTED

FICTION

THE EVENING WOLVES, by Joan Chase (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18.95). "Dad admits he was born to gripe and give everybody a hard time," says fourteen-year-old Margy at the beginning of this study in pathology, and Dad does go on to give her, her sister, her little brother, and their eventual stepmother a hard time throughout this directionless, frustrating, but ambitious and tantalizing story. Margy cooks, hangs laundry on the line in freezing weather, and mothers her infant brother, while the younger Ruthanne makes futile stands against a father so contradictory—uncaring and demanding, seductive and unjust—that there's no possible way to win. The narration is divided among the children and the second wife; she is stupid, hidebound, and self-deceiving, and her sections are the most conventionally entertaining. For the children, the author can't resist being writerly and extravagant, endowing them with the capacity to come up with things like "I feel the lonesomeness of our life in the house in the dark where we lie by the fire in No Man's Land, company for a disappointed man." You hope that these children will be rescued, that they'll get away, though the very claustrophobia of their subjective voices makes it clear by the end that, wherever they may get to, the damage has already been done.

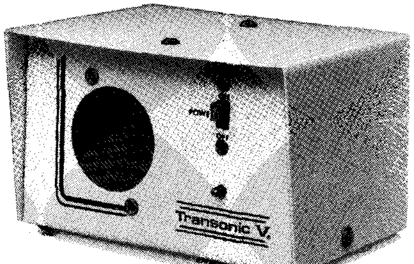
SING SOFT, SING LOUD, by Patricia McConnel (Atheneum; $18.95). The author is more than frank about the autobiographical, fact-based nature of these "Scenes from Two Lives," as the book is subtitled. She spent a good deal of time behind bars, and wants the rest of us to know what it is like to be in prison, where most of the scenes take place. The first cycle of stories concerns Iva, who has the mocking belligerence of a young woman too uneducated to manage even a waitressing job. Toni, of the second set, started out middle class. The two lives converge not so much in prison as in the way the women feel trapped long before they are physically locked up. You get a sense of how constricted and helpless they are when Toni is admired for leaving a boyfriend who wanted her to turn tricks, only to find one who has her smuggling heroin in her bra. It is impossible not to be roused by these stories, whether to shock and incredulity or to action. Though McConnel does not have the skill to make the texture of these lives visceral, she does go for the drama. The result is compulsively readable—*True Confessions* with punch.

ON HER OWN, by Naomi Bliven (Grove; $19.95). Fresh from a breakup with her Hollywood-screenwriter husband, Alida Kelly conceives of her life as a story lacking plot, direction, and love interest. Like the heroine of any well-shaped tale, Alida shortly finds all three, but not before, installed back home at her mother's Connecticut estate, she wonders if she might not be "the star of a dramatic genre yet to be invented—the drawing-room tragedy." The year is 1975, and she sets out to remake herself in what now seem modest ways: enrolling in a course, making tentative new friendships, fulfilling a "passion for objects" by landing a job in a Manhattan gallery. Alida's story is ultimately more entertaining than instructive, and the social nuances of her new life are examined to great (often comic) effect. Of a tiresome telephone conversation we are told, "It seemed as if they talked forever; important communications—'I love you'; 'He's dead'; 'You're hired'—are brief; unimportant ones niggle for hours." In this witty and perceptive first novel, the "unimportant" communications winningly upstage life lessons.

GENERAL

CLEAR PICTURES: FIRST LOVES, FIRST GUIDES, by Reynolds Price (Atheneum; $19.95). The noted novelist's childhood memoir is at once unpretentious and magnificent. Price's recollections of his family connections in several small towns in North Carolina show us members of the white middle class as they were in the nineteen-thirties, forties, and fifties—men and women with no claim to wealth, power, or genius, but fully gifted with individuality and portrayed in accurate, understated prose. His father's struggles with the bottle and the Depression, say, and an art teacher's wordless lesson in the pleasure of craftsmanship are the stuff of everyday, not epic, yet the language dignifies the ordinary and reveals what might be called the glory or glamour as well as the comedy of plain people. The blacks who figure in his stories occasion perplexed reflections on the inexplicable blindness of whites, whose closeness to blacks was never translated into questioning, let alone challenging, systematic inequality. Yet on race, as on religion—another pervasive aspect of Southern life that the author encountered early—he is less an opiner or an arguer than a faithful limner. Photographs.

FROM BEIRUT TO JERUSALEM, by Thomas L. Friedman (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22.95). An engrossing account of the author's service as a foreign correspondent in Lebanon (1979-84) and Israel (1984-88). Mr. Friedman explains how Lebanon, once a tolerant, urbane resort and financial center, regressed to savagery, and with telling details he conveys daily life in Beirut while the city is being blown up around its inhabitants: a two-year-



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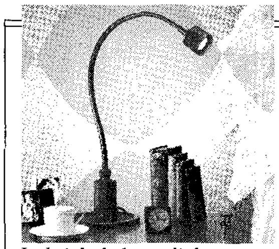

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old boy whose parents have told him that shelling is just thunder asks anxiously, "Daddy, is it raining without water again?" Although the author is a Jew, as an American he found Israel a foreign country, and believes that it is not coping realistically with one of its most important problems: the majority of Israelis consider their occupation of the West Bank benevolent and cannot understand why the Palestinians resent them. While Mr. Friedman flatters no one—his portrait of Yasir Arafat, for example, is scathing—he does discover attractive and valuable Jews, Christians, and Muslims of every variety.

Stone Work, by John Jerome (Viking; $17.95). Mr. Jerome finds, quite literally, sermons in stones—stones that he cannibalizes from old walls near his home in western Massachusetts and hauls down to make new walls. Work, physical work, inspires him to thought, to meditate and muse. "I began doing stone work because I wanted . . . to get stoned on work," he notes. "The aim of a more sensory life, after all, is only to get stoned on simpler, subtler things." He quotes Buffon: "Let us gather facts in order to have ideas." Mr. Jerome's facts are what he observes in his woods and fields and ponds, in his dogs and in assorted wildlife. There is very little fancy here. He has a physiological mind, geared to muscles and molecules, and the sermons he gives have to do with how and why things work. They are well-made sermons and well worth attending to.

Mother Country: Britain, the Welfare State, and Nuclear Pollution, by Marilynne Robinson (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $18.95). This book imparts urgent and, to most Americans, unfamiliar information. The author tells us that a British nuclear installation at Sellafield, near the Lake District, has been polluting soil, air, and water (including the Irish Sea) for the last thirty-five years. Although the rate of childhood leukemia near the plant is ten times the national average, no serious, large-scale protests have been made against the facility's existence or its technologies; and although other nations are affected by polluted winds and ocean currents, none have brought diplomatic pressure on the British government. Ms. Robinson asks why a modern government can freely perpetrate such an enormity, and, starting from the Ordinance of Labourers of 1349, answers that British political culture has always assured the exploitation of the many by the few. Much of what the author says about British history needs saying, but not, perhaps, in this book; environmental issues are not class issues.

Note: "Feeding the Rat: Profile of a Climber," by A. Alvarez, has been published by Atlantic Monthly ($17.95). Nearly all the contents first appeared in *The New Yorker*. . . . Ian Frazier's "Great Plains" has been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux ($17.95). Most of the contents originally appeared here.

MYSTERY AND CRIME

Talking God, by Tony Hillerman (Harper & Row; $17.95). Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn of the Navajo Tribal Police is called to the scene of a homicide. Meanwhile, Officer Jim Chee, Leaphorn's subordinate and occasional colleague, is dispatched to arrest one Henry Highhawk, a Smithsonian Institution conservator who considers himself a Navajo, on a federal fugitive warrant—and finds him at a Yeibichai, or Night Chant, ceremony deep in the reservation. A slip of paper found in the dead man's shirt pocket has the name and place of the ceremony written on it. Leaphorn knows nothing about Highhawk, Chee knows nothing about the murdered man. Later, much later, Leaphorn observes of himself and Chee, "We are like two dogs who followed two different sets of tracks to the same brush pile. One dog thinks there's a rabbit under the brush, the other thinks it's a bobcat." Mr. Hillerman has never offered us a more engaging puzzle.

•

Head of F.D.A. says he is upset by reports of brides.—*News Summary in the Times.*

Misogynist!

•

Recently we were invited to a meal here by Joey Adams, that "strictly for laughs," lineal descendant of Confucious and his wife Cindy.—*Sheldon Landwehr in the Post.*

Or was it Charlie Chan and his wife Suzy?

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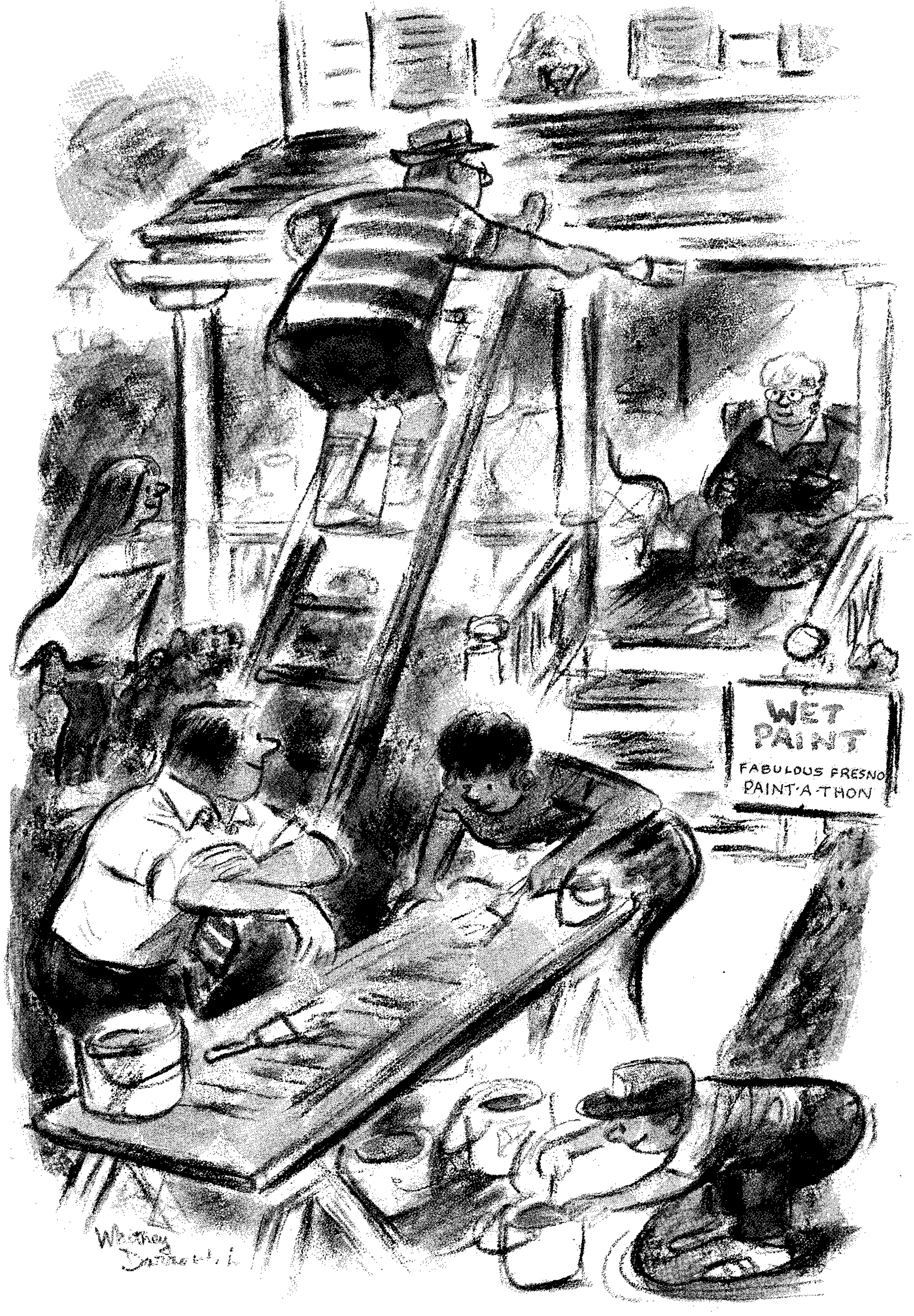

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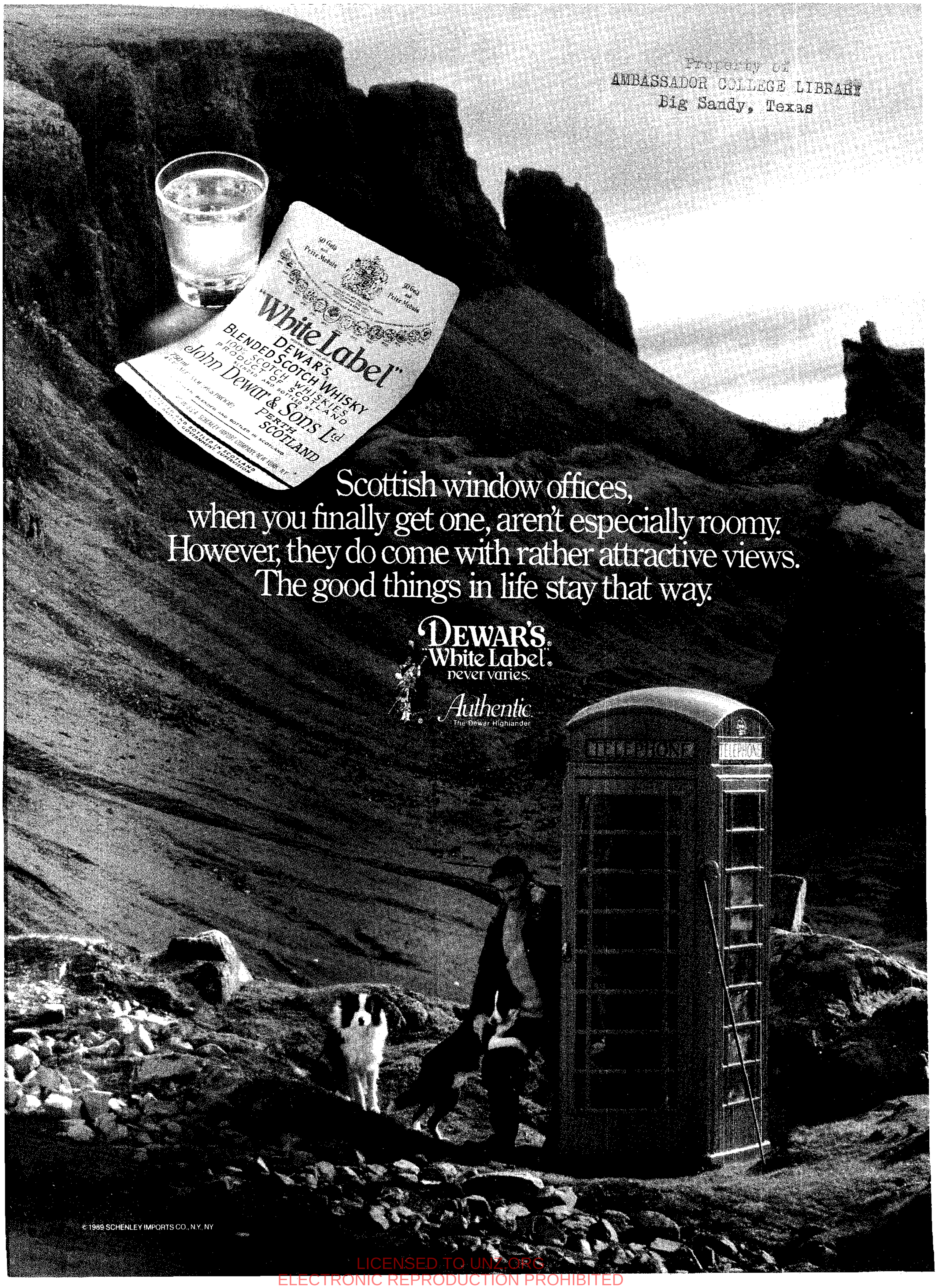

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